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COMMONWEAL

SPRING BOOKS

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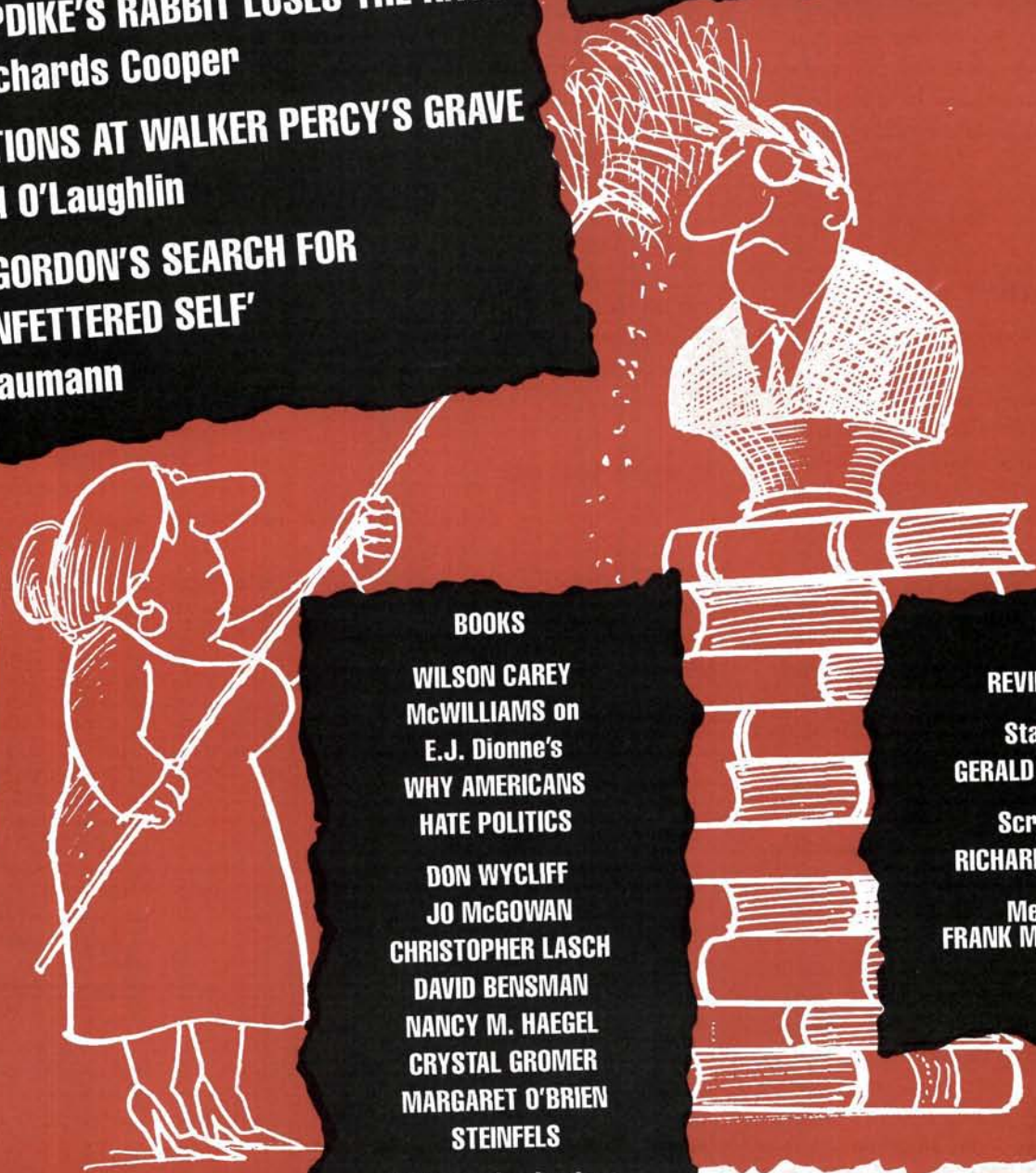
Rand Richards Cooper

REFLECTIONS AT WALKER PERCY'S GRAVE
Michael O'Laughlin

MARY GORDON'S SEARCH FOR THE 'UNFETTERED SELF'
Paul Baumann



BOOKS

WILSON CAREY McWILLIAMS on E.J. Dionne's WHY AMERICANS HATE POLITICS

DON WYCLIFF
JO McGOWAN
CHRISTOPHER LASCH
DAVID BENSMAN
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CORRESPONDENCE

Hopkins misjudged?

Newburgh, N.Y.

To the Editors: Re John Garvey's piece "Gays & Straights Together" [March 22], in which he insouciantly speaks of the homosexuality of Gerard Manley Hopkins:

Since Hopkins was celibate and scrupulously chaste, it is misleading and unjust to judge him a homosexual.

There were some schoolboy infatuations, which were a common experience in all-male English public schools of his time. Otherwise, there is no evidence whatever for putting him in the same class with W. H. Auden, a self-proclaimed homosexual.

JAMES FINN COTTER
(REV.) JAMES GILHOOLEY

The author replies:

I am a heterosexual; so was Don Juan. My sexual habits are different from his. Nevertheless, we are both heterosexuals.

Please do not ask an Irish-American to comment on the crushes of English public school boys.

JOHN GARVEY

How to help in crisis

Bethany, Conn.

To the Editors: Re: Julia Upton's article, "Father, I'm Pregnant" [April 5]. On a journey in 1985 my husband and I were most impressed by a large sign standing outside St. Michael's Catholic Church in downtown Houston, Texas. Clearly visible to any passing motorist or pedestrian, the sign read: "The clergy and people of this parish pledge to any woman faced with an unwanted pregnancy who comes to this church for aid, immediate practical help, if she is prepared to let her baby be born. We pledge this to any woman regardless of her religious faith."

We were surprised to learn from Father John Perusina of St. Michael's that this policy had been in place for approximately twelve years at that time, that it cost the parish only about $10,000 a year, and that about fifteen women were helped by the program annually. Often only counseling was needed, since many young women had insurance, but the parish had helped with medical expenses, food, rent, baby clothes, etc. Basically the parish served as a touchstone for putting women in contact with available resources.

I wish I could say that our own parish has adopted a similar program, but after everything was in place we were stopped—not by the people, not by the clergy, but by the diocesan lawyers, who feared "potential liability."

I salute the people and clergy of St. Michael's, who have faithfully provided such a public and creative alternative, as well as the Birthright organization, which has long been a compassionate advocate for women and the unborn. My congratulations also to Julia Upton for her creative and objective effort to highlight a perceptual problem affecting the Catholic church.

FRAN MADDEN

A war for oil

Staten Island, N.Y.

To the Editors: In "The 'Just War' War" [April 5], Francis X. Winters seeks to establish that on the issue of using force or sanctions, the U.S. Catholic bishops were on both sides of the question. The National Council of Catholic Bishops [NCCB] voted 249-15 to support the letter of Archbishop Roger Mahony enunciating Catholic just-war principles in support of sanctions as the way to go, while approving the sending of U.S. forces to the Gulf area. In two letters to President George Bush, Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk, NCCB president, strongly endorsed the choice of sanctions over violence, contending in his second letter that Operation Desert Storm "would likely violate" just-war principles. Against this preponderance of views, Professor Winters juxtaposes individual statements of support for the war made by Cardinal Bernard Law and Archbishops James T. Hickey and Joseph T. Ryan. He also cites a statement by Archbishop John Roach dissenting from the view that the bishops' conference had reached a clear consensus on the morality of the war. No doubt all this is accurate. It remains true that most American Catholic bishops were against the use of force and supported continued reliance on sanctions, and that Pope John Paul II warned that war in the Gulf "could be devastating and tragic."

On the just-war principle of last resort, Winters confuses the issue by engaging an elaborate polemic, inapposite and notional. The principle simply requires that other methods of settling international conflict—diplomacy, compromise, sanctions—be tried before a resort to force. Mr. Bush did not give these means enough chance to work. True, any country attacked may defend itself immediately. But the United States was not attacked and was not justified in using force before thoroughly testing peaceful means to a just solution.

Neither can the U.S. action be accommodated under the just-war terms of due proportion. The large-scale destruction of Iraq, the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people, combatants and noncombatants, the devastation and displacement of pos-

(Continued on page 348)

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COMMONWEAL

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Thin-skinned

Consider this multiple choice test about Catholics and the media. Which of the following propositions reflects your impressions of how the Catholic church is reported in the press and on TV?

- The mass media image of Catholics is only slightly better than that of the Nazis.
- The church is overwhelmingly portrayed as an oppressive or authoritarian institution.
- On most controversies involving Catholic teachings, the church comes out on the losing side of the debate as reported in the media.

Now, choose between these answers:

☐ None of the above.
☐ All of the above.

Which is correct?

Well, if you are a regular consumer of the national media, and if your Catholic skin is of average dimensions (neither too thick nor too thin), you may find yourself dissatisfied with coverage of the Catholic church, but not convinced that any of these statements is accurate. Better check "none of the above."

But wait. All the propositions in our test appear as statements of fact in a major new study on the subject, "Media Coverage of the Catholic Church" (carried out by the Center for Media and Public Affairs; funded by the Knights of Columbus and the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights). In the study's introduction and "executive summary," the proposition about Catholics and Nazis is quoted from another source with evident agreement. The other two are declared the scientific conclusions of a "comprehensive and systematic examination" drawn from ten thousand (yes, 10,000) news items about the Catholic church in the U.S. (published in *Time* magazine, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post*, or aired by "CBS Evening News" over three five-year periods since 1964), using techniques of content analysis allegedly allowing researchers "to classify the news objectively and systematically, to produce valid measures of news content."

Science has spoken. The right answer has to be "all of the above."

Or has it? A careful review of the report with our office calculator raises serious questions about the researchers' methods and judgments and especially about those conclusions expressed in the opening pages.

Go to the calculator: Of 1,876 stories (from the 10,000 total) sampled by the study, the report says that 115 strongly characterized the church as either oppressive or liberating. This meant that these articles contained "emotive" words like "authoritarian" or "rigid" or "emancipating" in a clearly one-sided way. Of the 115 articles, 98 were strongly colored in the "oppressive" direction. That's 5 percent of 1,876 stories. If accurate, that 5 percent is nothing for the media to brag about. But how does it follow that "the church was *overwhelmingly* portrayed as an oppressive or

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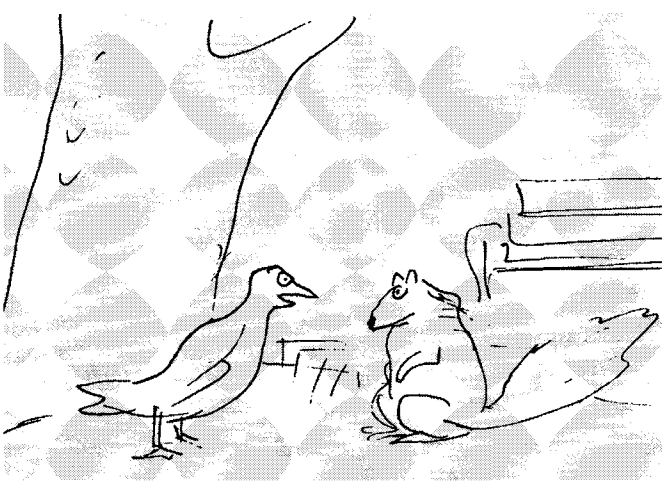
authoritarian institution"—the claim repeated at the report's opening and conclusion, that led off a press release and that has appeared in numerous news stories on the report?

A more accurate representation of this data would say: "Only a small percentage of media reports on the church turn out to be highly colored. One out of twenty presented the church as oppressive." A report on media fairness ought to be fair.

And what about that "emotive" language which portrays the church as conservative, oppressive, or irrelevant? How about such terms as "conservative Catholics," "patriarchy," "monarchy," and "fascist state"? These appear in a *New York Times* story (October 21, 1988) about Matthew Fox's silencing by the Vatican—one story among several that the authors reprint and then dissect to show how they do content analysis.

Jane Gross, the *Times* reporter, wrote: "The Institute [in Culture and Creation Spirituality] has long been the object of criticism by *conservative Catholics* for its unusual curriculum and faculty, which includes a masseuse, a yoga instructor, an Episcopal vicar turned Zen Buddhist, and a self-described witch, Starhawk...." Later the story quotes Fox directly: "'The Vatican keeps telling us that the church is not a democracy,' Father Fox said. 'I know of no one who would argue that point. But maybe the church ought to be. Did Jesus intend a *monarchy*? Did Jesus intend a *fascist state*?'" Fox is also cited as saying that the church is a "dying *patriarchy*."

In Journalism 101, the first quiz question would be: Was this a story? Answer: If the Vatican thought Fox was important enough to silence, the *Times* had to rate the incident as newsworthy. It's a fact and part of the story that Fox has been criticized mostly by people who call themselves "conservative." Obviously, the story could not be properly reported only by running a Vatican announcement; the reporter had to give Fox a chance to have his say—and part of his reply should give at least some liberals firsthand evidence of why he might be in trouble with the Vatican. Yet, after the emotive words, "*conservative*," "*fascist*," "*patriarchy*," are counted, the story winds up as one more bit of proof of media bias. Curiously, the researchers pay no attention to the story's lead paragraph: "An obscure Roman Catholic priest, popular on the New Age lecture circuit, but about to be silenced by the Vatican, today cast himself in the mold of Galileo, St. Thomas Aquinas, and other Catholics who have been disciplined over the centuries...." That's a none-too-subtle suggestion of a certain grandiosity on Fox's part; his partisans might well use it to show that the *Times* is indeed biased—against New Age priests or in favor of the Catholic establishment.



"It's true. People like squirrels better than birds."

Back to the calculator: In all of those 1,876 stories about Catholicism, "Media Coverage" identifies 5,644 persons as news sources, of whom 3,978 (70 percent) were identified as Catholic sources; 2,201 (55 percent) of these were members of the hierarchy; 810 (20 percent) were priests; and 510 (13 percent) were lay people. Yes, there is bias here—but the authors of the report don't notice it! Further: All of the top twenty Catholic newsmakers in these 1,876 stories were hierarchs and clerics, beginning with Paul VI (cited 228 times), John Paul II (107), Cardinals Bernardin (51), O'Connor (39), O'Boyle (32), Charles Curran (30)...down to number 20, Hans Küng (13).

"On most controversies involving Catholic teachings, the church comes out on the losing end of the issue debate as reported in the media." But the report itself shows that the hierarchy was the dominant source (41 percent) for presenting Catholic doctrine; then the clergy (34 percent); and "a much smaller number of statements were provided by dissidents who voiced their discontent or opposition to church policies or actions." On what basis then does the study justify its image—dare we call it "emotive"—of the church coming out "on the losing end"?

It works like this. Forget that 30 percent of those 1,876 stories deal with noncontroversial "announcements... and the accomplishments of outstanding Catholics" or that a full half of them featured no debate over church positions. Concentrate on the other half. Limit your view only to the explicit opinions evaluating controverted points like sexual morality, birth control, abortion, reform of the church's power structure, dissent in the church, and church involvement in politics. You will then find that negative evaluations outnumbered favorable ones by ratios ranging from 51 to 49 (church involvement in politics) to 73 to 27 (celibacy). You will also find some areas, like ecumenism and (surprisingly) abortion, where the bean-counting shows more favorable than critical views.

There are several serious problems with both the method and the conclusions drawn from it. Ecclesiologically, the assumption underlying the study identifies "the church" solely with certain official positions or attitudes. Thus if more sources are calling for change in the church's power structure or attitudes toward women and minorities than are endorsing the status quo, that gets registered as putting "the church...on the losing end." Methodologically, there is an unrealistic division between statements of church teaching by authorities (not counted in these ratios) and positive evaluations of them (which are counted); and there is an implicit assumption that negative and positive evaluative statements should come out fifty-fifty, regardless of the topic, the state of opinion in the church and society, and so on. If you demur from the premises and if you look closely at the actual mix of the findings, you may still derive some valid criticism of the media's performance from the study's tabulation of evaluative opinions; but in fact the overall picture turns out

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to be painted in subtle shades of gray rather than in the black-and-white of winning and losing sides. (Copies of the report are available from the Knights of Columbus, 1275 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W. Washington, D.C. 20004.)

The pity of all this is that there is a real problem (and rather than addressing it, this report is now part of it). Assuming, once again, that you are a regular reader/viewer of the national media, and that you're neither indifferent to nor paranoid about media coverage of the church, we suspect that you couldn't bring yourself to accept "all of the above" as the right answer to the opening quiz—but that you do in fact encounter instances of bias, ignorance, stupidity, or simple wrongheadedness in that coverage. Without benefit of research, how would you describe these experiences? Irritating? Offensive? Part of the price the church pays for its "countercultural" positions?

Our answers: "Often," "sometimes," and "it depends." There is such a thing as Catholic-bashing in the media. Consider, for example, the cartoon that accompanied a recent *New York Times* Op-Ed piece (April 6, 1991) by Kenneth Woodward arguing against the proposed canonization of Queen Isabella—who among other things ordered Jews to become Catholics or get out of Spain. "Isabella Is No Saint," read the headline. Fair enough. But the cartoon shows the face of John Paul II in the dress of the queen. What are the cartoonist, and the *Times*, suggesting? The pope is an anti-Semite? (There was no evidence that he favored the Isabella campaign.) A transvestite? Our guess is that no one worried much about what it meant. In some circles the pope is just fair game and forget about the details.

Sometimes the media show bias by omission, as in the Boston newspapers' grossly inadequate coverage of an ACT-UP demonstration at Holy Cross Cathedral last year (*Commonweal*, September 14, 1990). Sometimes there are problems of cultural ignorance: *Commonweal* occasionally fields inquiries from junior staff members of newspapers or, more likely, TV shows that reveal a level of illiteracy about Catholicism and about religion that would make the devil weep. And sometimes journalists are simply dense, as in the familiar dismissal, occasionally subtle, often blatant, of Catholic opposition to abortion as rising purely out of misogyny and medievalism.

But it's not always easy to get at what is offensive about media treatment of the church. The degree to which Catholics—or former Catholics—are critical may reflect honest disagreement, and editors don't feel compelled to regard coverage of such disagreements as anti-Catholic; why should they? Choices made by church leaders in seeking or shunning publicity don't always help. What exactly does televising the exorcism of a sixteen-year-old girl on "20/20" tell us about Catholicism? Alternatively, what does the persistent refusal of diocesan officials to speak up about the problem of pedophilia among the clergy tell us?

On occasion, practically all groups—Italians, doctors, blacks, Jews, Arabs, southpaws, Baptists, the rich, farmers, cops, lawyers—feel slighted or scorned or smeared by the media, and sometimes they're right. How to respond? An organized anti-defamation campaign is one answer, but if it's to be done, 'twere best that it be done well. Though Catholicism as religion and the Catholic church as institution are indeed often misperceived in this country, how much mileage is to be gained by efforts to show Catholics as a powerless and picked-upon minority? In a climate where acting the victim has become one more form of political manipulation, the church has nothing to gain from whining. And, to the extent that there really is Catholic-bashing in the media, media-bashing by Catholics will do more harm than good. In our view, "Media Coverage" demonstrates, first, that its authors and funders don't understand journalism very well, and, second, that they don't know bias when they see it. It is a meticulously carried-out execution of an ill-conceived project which may do more to create complacency about Catholic-bashing than to counter it. That's a pity.

ET CETERA

ONE ELECTION TO GO, PLEASE. For those old enough to remember, Ronald Reagan's election victory over President Jimmy Carter in 1980 owed much to the hostage drama in Iran. Our inability to negotiate a release of the American hostages held in Teheran by the Ayatollah's revolutionaries made Carter look like the perverbial "pitiful giant." In rode Ronald Reagan on that white horse of his. Surprise surprise, so the hostages were released on the very day President Reagan was inaugurated.

Some people suspected that Reagan's victory and the curious release of the hostages was more than a coincidence. The Iran *contra* revelations lent creadence to that view. Now the *New York Times* and the respected PBS documentary series "Front Line" have both carried stories exploring the possibility that the late William J. Casey, Reagan's campaign manager and future CIA director, cut a deal with the Iranians in which hostages were not to be released until after the November election. In return, it is alleged, Iran was promised military hardware.

A deal between Reagan's men and the mullahs? Stranger things have happened. Ask Mrs. Reagan's astrologer.

TESTIMONY ON EL SALVADOR

COMPLICITY & CORRUPTION

DEMOCRACY & DEMILITARIZATION

The government of El Salvador and the Salvadoran revolutionary movement, known as the FMLN, have been meeting in Mexico City, moving haltingly toward an agreement on UN proposals that could lead to a cease-fire in that country's eleven-year-old civil war. Once achieved, the cease-fire might provide the required environment for a definitive peace settlement. Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar, his designated nego-

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tiator, Alvaro de Soto, and the entire UN team deserve praise for their competence and painstaking work in the negotiations.

Historically, U.S. policy toward El Salvador has had as its cornerstone reliance on the coercive power of the Salvadoran military. In particular, over the last decade, we have locked ourselves into support for an army that routinely tortures and kills large numbers of citizens on the mere suspicion that they sympathize with change. The murders of Archbishop Oscar Romero, the four American churchwomen, and the six Jesuit priests and their co-workers are not exceptional. They serve to remind us of the tens of thousands of others who have died at the hands of the Salvadoran military.

Until very recently, the U.S. rationalized its policy toward Central America on the premise that however regrettable, institutionalized military violence must be tolerated because the turbulence that often accompanies profound change might serve as an opportunity for Soviet and Cuban imperialism. Now that neither the Soviet Union nor Cuba has either the will or the strength to project power into Central America, that thesis has lost whatever relevance it might once have had.

Democracy itself has now replaced the cold war as the rationale for our intervention in El Salvador. Legitimate and open U.S. support for democracy in Central America and elsewhere is necessary. Yet the crucial questions for Central America and its people are: Will the U.S. break with the past and encourage Central America to follow the example of Costa Rica and move toward democracy and demilitarization? Or will we use our enormous influence to again guide El Salvador down that blind alley which insists that for Central America democracy and militarism are compatible concepts? Unless the U.S. government supports both democracy and demilitarization, Salvadoran military intransigence, supported by the extreme right wing of the governing Arena party, will cause further negotiations to fail.

The U.S. bears a share of the responsibility for inflicting on the Salvadoran people a military that massacres its own citizens and enjoys total immunity for its outrages. In this country, we watched stunned and disbelieving as a defeated Saddam Hussein employed aircraft and helicopter gunships to bomb and strafe the Kurdish people. In El Salvador, however, we are not simply passive observers. There, it is our aircraft and our helicopter gunships, our ammunition and our bombs that rain death and destruction on the Salvadoran people. For the last eleven years, these modern engines of war have wiped out whole towns and villages in El Salvador. Still, the Salvadoran revolutionary movement has not only survived, it has grown stronger. This bears witness to the essential evil of the present system and the overpowering need for change.

The responsibility of the U.S. is not limited to supplying weapons. During the investigation of the murder of the Jesuits, the *Washington Post* and the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights reported that a group of U.S. CIA officers share a building with the National Intelligence Directorate (DNI), the Salvadoran military intelligence agency. These CIA agents routinely attend DNI meetings. On November 16, 1989, a junior Salvadoran officer interrupted the DNI meeting to report the death of the Jesuits. Those in attendance "cheered and clapped." When asked if CIA agents were present at the November 16 meeting, U.S. ambassador to El Salvador William G. Walker told a group of U.S. Jesuits, "I have asked the question and they tell me no." The Jesuits had no trouble comprehending why Ambassador Walker phrased his response in such a careful manner.

For the CIA to participate in the intelligence deliberations of another government is a highly dubious practice, reminiscent of our Vietnam experience. In the first place, no truly sovereign government would tolerate the presence of foreign observers at such sensitive internal meetings. Secondly, our presence and participation in these meetings would appear to make our government an accessory to the policies and actions of the Salvadoran military, in somewhat the same manner that we were complicit in the policies and actions of another Central American military, that of Panama.

In Panama, the name of Gen. Manuel Noriega became synonymous with corruption and brutality. It was a secret from the American people that Gen. Noriega was an asset of the CIA, but it was not a secret from the officers of the Panamanian Defense Force (PDF). On the contrary, the power of Noriega to gain control of the PDF related directly to the perception of his fellow officers that Noriega was the chosen instrument of our intelligence community. Without the CIA connection, decent officers in the PDF might well have taken matters into their own hands early on and successfully ousted Noriega. The officers knew that

This Promised Land, El Salvador
Photographs by Steve Cagan
Text by Beth Cagan and Steve Cagan
Foreword by Dr. Segundo Montes, S.J.

"For the war-hounded refugees of Colomoncagua, whose story Beth and Steve Cagan tell with great sensitivity and respect, utopia was never a pipedream, it was a practical necessity. We are constantly told to keep hope alive. A book like *This Promised Land, El Salvador* gives hope a reason for living."—Barbara Ehrenreich

Ten years ago thousands of men, women, and children from El Salvador fled to Honduras to escape government repression and violence. They gathered together into a refugee camp, Colomoncagua. What began as a disorganized collection of individuals would develop into a near-utopian community. Steve and Beth Cagan tell the story of the refugees' camp, their harrowing flight, and their brave decision to return to El Salvador.
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Noriega was a drug trafficker, and they knew that the U.S. government knew. They concluded, therefore, that Noriega and his policies reflected the priorities of the U.S. government.

There is no exact parallel to Manuel Noriega in the Salvadoran armed forces. Yet if you seek a reason why the Salvadoran military has seldom taken U.S. congressional concerns about human rights violations seriously and has never tried or convicted any officer for any such crime, you might well query some Salvadoran captains and majors about the relationship which exists between the CIA and certain senior military officers whose reputation for cruelty and barbarism sets the worst possible example. It would seem unrealistic to expect the Salvadoran military to place themselves under the law when we have taught them that the rewards of a U.S. connection are for those who hold the law in total contempt.

A few weeks ago the former president of Costa Rica, Oscar Arias, wrote that the leaders of the region

> want to bury the pain and the bitterness of war in order to begin constructing a new Central America characterized by the democracy, freedom, and prosperity deserved by their people. I know this prosperity will not come about if we do not stop spending our scarce resources on weapons and soldiers' salaries. To that end, since I left the presidency of the Republic of Costa Rica, I have been promoting the demilitarization of Central America.
>
> As the citizen of a nation that has found that the best response to underdevelopment is the absence of weapons, I believe that it is time to recognize these men and women who have the vision and courage to disarm their countries in order to struggle for development in democracy and freedom.

Great nations do not change course lightly. When after due deliberation a new course is set, then it becomes the task of the administration to ensure that logical changes that flow from the new policy are put into effect. Most importantly, means which reflect old objectives but that are in conflict with new objectives must be rooted out. This is particularly difficult to accomplish because a new policy is seldom defined with the necessary precision and at the necessary level to overcome competing bureaucratic interests.

Only a clear commitment by the U.S. to democracy through demilitarization can overcome Salvadoran military intransigence. But it is not yet clear to the Salvadoran negotiators where the U.S. stands. We have, since 1948, given firm, unequivocal support to a demilitarized Costa Rica. More recently, we have supported a similar policy in Panama. What we need for ourselves, for Central America, and particularly for El Salvador is a diplomacy that emphasizes the rule of law. The president of El Salvador, like the president of the United States, has an obligation to see that the laws of his country are faithfully executed. At this writing, President Alfredo Cristiani is powerless to enforce the laws of his country, to arrest those who torture and murder, in good part because the U.S. continues to support a military establishment that insists that the law has no power over it. The U.S. should move resolutely to support the UN negotiating team by making clear our support for lasting peace based on a progressive and complete demilitarization with abolition of armies as the final goal. Unless we adopt this position, the Salvadoran people's hopes for peace will prove illusory and the war will continue to drag on.

ROBERT E. WHITE

Robert E. White, U.S. ambassador to El Salvador during the Carter administration, is president of the Center for International Policy in Washington, D.C. This article is based on testimony given before the House Foreign Affairs Committee last month.

THE CULTURE OF ATHEISM

FREEDOM TO BELIEVE

FR. GALLAGHER GOES TO ROME

Michael Paul Gallagher, S.J., an Irish Jesuit, was appointed to the Pontifical Council for Dialogue with Non-Believers in Rome last year. He is responsible for the section dealing with the English-speaking world. Before taking up his duties, Father Gallagher taught English literature at University College, Dublin (UCD). He has made a special study, arising out of his pastoral work with college students, of atheism and belief in the modern world. He completed a doctorate in the area in the early eighties and has published widely on the subject. Gallagher's most recent book, *Struggles of Faith* (Dublin: Columba Press, 1990) is a collection of essays. A book of pastoral reflections on his university ministry is due out soon: *Where Is Your God*? (London: Darton, Longman and Todd).

When he lived in Dublin, Gallagher chose to reside in Ballymun, a poor area north of the city's center, far removed from his university campus. When I visited I reached his apartment via a squalid, graffiti-scrawled, urine-smelling stairwell. His sitting room floor was covered in gray linoleum seamed with brown tape. A few reference books, including *A Working Woman's Cookbook,* rested on shelves in the corner. There were neat piles of newspapers and magazines. A large photo of Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, the general of the Society of Jesus, hung on the wall.

PHALAN: Tell me a little about yourself, your background.

GALLAGHER: I think I was a "church atheist" as a student, meaning that my difficulties with faith in fact were with the church as I was running into it in Ireland. This would be the late fifties, before the council. Later, I discovered a much more vibrant community of young Christians at Caen University in France, in a much more pagan society of course. That was what gave the stimulus to rediscovering my faith. I did a degree in literature in Dublin and another one in France before joining the Jesuits at twenty-two.

PHALAN: Was your vocation a long time in gestation?

GALLAGHER: Yes and no. The question was there in school. I went to a Jesuit school, Clongowes Wood College, famous

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for people like James Joyce. Indeed, it hadn't changed much between his time and mine. It has changed much more since. I liked some of the Jesuits and thought of joining, but my father wasn't too keen on it and I dropped the idea. I'm glad because it gave me a chance to do a certain amount of growing up. I nearly got married at one stage, in France. After ordination I went back to UCD. In total I have been there over twenty years listening to what's happening in the culture, to what's happening to the students, keeping my fingers on the pulse of faith—or lack of it.

PHALAN: You had some time in the United States?

GALLAGHER: I had a traveling studentship and I used two years of it in Oxford and that left me with one year free. So I went to Johns Hopkins in Baltimore with the rather grand title of "fellow by courtesy."

PHALAN: May we move on now to the theme of belief and unbelief in the modern world and in the English-speaking world in particular?

GALLAGHER: It strikes me that Ireland is probably the only country in the English-speaking world whose population is majority Catholic. This creates a strangely split world consciousness: Catholic, Latin, Celtic vs. post-colonial and influenced by the efficiency-culture of England. Then in my lifetime Ireland has had major changes: predominantly rural to predominantly urban; protected to open. Strange to say, Catholic faith hasn't suffered as much as it might have been expected to. I expected a more drastic collapse. Yet, a more sinister collapse has actually happened.

I'm not always impressed by full churches; I'm much more impressed by the fruits of faith. I have a feeling that behind the large figures of church attendance lurks a certain practical atheism—in other words that people's hearts are not really challenged by the gospel. Practice can be fairly nominal. I'm much more inclined to stress that we have a problem of faith in Ireland.

PHALAN: Is a sudden collapse still a possibility?

GALLAGHER: Yes. No priests in parishes in Dublin will say to you they are unworried about the future of the faith. In Ballymun, practice is down to about 10 percent. But those who go [to Mass], go with a terrific sense of community and a terrific sense of Christian commitment.

PHALAN: What about other parts of the world?

GALLAGHER: This new job in the Vatican is going to ask me to specialize, in particular with the English-speaking world, and to focus on North America. The various forms of militant or systematic atheism that were strongly present in the fifties and sixties are much quieter, even in the English-speaking world. You will find groups who are hostile to all religion but they are a tiny minority; they may be a vocal minority, but they're tiny.

The more common form of unbelief is a cultural one, what I was calling practical atheism—meaning that the very culture undermines the gospel. The culture is a kind of Herod, as in the story of the Wise Men. After all, he pretended to be interested in religion whereas, in fact, he wanted to kill. There's that appearance of friendliness towards religion in our northern, English-speaking world, but in reality, the culture is deeply relativistic.

I would say the biggest danger to religion in the English-speaking wealthy countries is that the gospel becomes both passive and private. Passive in that you don't expect to make any difference to the world, and private (the two things go together) in that faith is something you keep in your heart or your soul and your relationship to God is something very hidden. So you lose out on a sense of community and you lose out on a sense of commitment.

In 1987, I spent a year in Latin America. It had the biggest impact on my faith since being a student. It's out of that that I would look at the limitations of northern society and the way in which it cramps the language of faith by its very assumptions and way of life.

PHALAN: Would some of us in the North be Herodians?

GALLAGHER: Perhaps without even knowing it. Many people would have such a private view of faith that they wouldn't have much of a social conscience at all about where their money is coming from or....

PHALAN: They wouldn't feel the tension....

GALLAGHER: Some will, some won't. One of the things I came across in Latin America was the phenomenon of North American volunteers with the Maryknolls and others who would come south. They'd come south often as couples, even with children. They'd live in poor areas and they would help out for perhaps two or three years as catechists or agricultural experts or whatever. The real energy was toward the future, what they call "the reverse ministry." This is because they go back to a place like the United States as families, having had a glimpse of something else that will make them forever alert and suspicious of Herod in the forms in which he may show himself.

PHALAN: What, therefore, can the church in North America and Europe do?

GALLAGHER: Come back to me in a year or so! It will be part of my job to acquaint myself with the various movements that are helping—or indeed hindering—faith in the English-speaking world. It will be a time of information-gathering and of being something of a resource person for the bishops, especially. Dialogue also happens. We're there as a pastoral research office, to listen and to communicate what is happening.

My own hope is that we may be able to shift the agenda away from doctrine to life. Many people think that difficulties in faith will be solved by a good intellectual answer. I completely disagree. In my experience, people are not free to believe. That's the title of a book I wrote—*Free to Believe*. The emphasis there is that it's not a question of pure truth. It's a question involving the whole society or a whole culture. Therefore, where faith is flourishing, as opposed to where it is declining, is where you find "the three pillars of faith." The three pillars of faith are very ancient and very new; they are: prayer, community, and service—especially of the wounded of the world.

I've found in my own work with students that if you can go in any of those doors it will lead you to the other two in time, at its own pace.

PHALAN: Is there no place for a traditional apologetics? What about the need expressed as "*fides quaerens intellectum*"?

GALLAGHER: An imaginative apologetics is crucial. I'm not saying that what you mean by "traditional" has no place. I know

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many people who have been helped by the writings of C.S. Lewis. But the older rationalist proofs don't "wash" any more for most people. They have to be communicated differently, starting from the experience of questioning and searching.

Part of the obstacle to faith in most of the English-speaking world comes from a church that is complacent and under-challenging and under-nourishing. A church that is perhaps still using the language that helped a pre-sixties generation. People have said, "Let's write Acts, chapter 29". In the New Testament text there are, of course, only twenty-eight chapters in the Acts of the Apostles. The whole adventure of the church is one long series of experiments in imagination, of trying to express the Good News of Jesus Christ in different languages, translating it, translating it, translating it.

PHALAN: Can we turn the question a bit, then and ask, "What militates against community, against prayer, against service?"

GALLAGHER: Very simple really. There are ancient roots and there are more modern roots. The ancient roots are idolatry and greed. Idolatry means that I want a god who doesn't challenge me and a god I can manage—like a golden calf. Many people have strange gods who cannot reveal and challenge their lives. That's idolatry—the most profound temptation against true faith.

Greed is another ancient root. It means that I cling to my egoist needs at the expense of anybody else. I don't want to be disturbed. Both roots are versions of rigidity.

Then there are more modern accumulations, as it were, on top of these ancient temptations. In our modern societies, especially in our wealthy societies, community has been killed. We live isolated lives. We have to create community, it isn't there naturally. Where I live in Dublin, in a poor area, in spite of all its brokenness, community is natural.

PHALAN: Yes, in the most inhospitable environment.

GALLAGHER: But there is community here. There is a sense of humanity here. We often use our wealth to build walls or to create distance. I think that's part of the modern thing—that the heart can't be touched if I am a fully paid-up member of the wealthy club... too well insulated. The gospel is best heard when people are listening and vulnerable to the other side of history. It needn't create crippling guilt... but a good guilt—"I'm here for something else than what I have been living." We are all here for something else than what our societies are living.

PHALAN: As you set off for the marble corridors of the Vatican do you have any fears about losing touch with "the other side of history"?

GALLAGHER: I fear there is a price to be paid. At least initially I don't imagine I will be able to have anything of the same contact with the poor. I'll be living in a large community of over a hundred in the center of Rome and the marginalized are literally on the margins—far out from the center. Chesterton said somewhere that every decision is a self-limitation. In fact does not the Latin root of the word decide mean cutting off? So the decision to accept this request by the Vatican means for the moment letting go of things that are dear to me. But in time I hope to find some way of staying in touch with the wounded and victimized. I need them more than they might need me. I need them to keep my heart in Christian focus.

TIMOTHY PHALAN

Timothy Phalan, a free-lance writer, lives in Enniskerry, Ireland.

OF SEVERAL MINDS John Garvey

GOING TO HELL BY INCHES

OBSERVE YOUR PASSIONS

Not long ago an insurance executive and his wife got into their private airplane, took off, and while they were in the air he shot her in the head, and then killed himself by downing a quart of scotch in fifteen minutes. Their bodies were found in the plane's wreckage. This occurs on a planet where at exactly the same time Kurds are watching their children starving, the sound of television quiz shows fills the rooms of old people, a woman gives birth to her first child, someone is moved to tears by the glory of Bach, sharks feed, frogs snap at flies, a couple driving on a remote country road wonder about what it would be like to live the lives of the people in the farmhouses they pass, parents abuse small children, a walrus dies with something like wonder on its mind, a young wife on the telephone to her mother forgets that the roast has been too long in the oven, beekeepers in South Texas fret over the advent of killer bees, and monks send up praise to God. Who knows all this.

What a place. As soon as I read the newspaper account of the murder/suicide I wondered about that murderous husband. What can take a person to such a moment? That question may be the reason that there are more good murder mysteries than there are books about war, or about hit-men. Killing done for political or business reasons we can understand, much as we might loathe it—but what passion could make us do this? What emotion would take us there? What would it be like to go from here to there? To have your world so fill up with a single passion that it crowds everything else out of your life except stopping another person's whole world—this is, among other things, intriguing. And I think it is important to understand that the murderer is not unlike you or me. A series of choices and surrenders makes that moment possible. People speak of being driven to murder, and no doubt that is what it feels like, an uncontrollable passion, a possession by something alien. Even more common forms of anger can feel like this. But it is really the result of choices made beforehand. It is our freedom that makes murder and suicide possible.

That isn't to say that a person at that moment feels free, is in fact not enslaved, driven, controlled. This is the result, how-

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ever, of lots of small choices and surrenders. What it feels like *now* isn't the point, and what it feels like has nothing to do with our freedom.

At the beginning of Lent, I attended a retreat at which a priest recommended something I'd seen recommended elsewhere. "The next time you're angry or really impatient," he said, "watch yourself. Look at the way you feel, even the physical location of the feeling." (This reminded me of what Meister Eckhart wrote about fasting: it means not imitating the physical conditions of Christ's fasts, but noticing what you want to do or are most inclined to do, refraining from it, and watching yourself very carefully.) He was speaking to the right audience. Impatience and anger have formed a lot of whatever it is I am, and I'd read this advice and taken it to heart before. It makes a lot of sense. When I first read the desert fathers I wondered why they spent so much time dealing with the problem of anger. That shows only how young I was when I first read them.

Understanding the ways anger, anxiety, depression, fear, and even common forms of impatience are all knotted together at the base is essential. It may not bring you any closer to stillness, or it may, but it will at least let you understand the thicket that lies between you and peace a little more clearly. It is very hard to take the advice (make that a command) "Be not afraid" to heart. It involves a struggle.

The fact that choice has been made a primary moral category in our time is something I've written about before. It never occurred to me, though, how much, how deeply, those stakes really mattered—how important it is to see that to choose freely is a matter of a sometimes very intense struggle, and the clarity it requires is hard-won, and there may be no feeling of clarity or satisfaction in the process.

But choices and surrenders have always been made within the context of cultures that either encourage or discourage going through the process of choosing, accepting, rejecting, or discerning in a reasonable way. Where choice is seen as a moral category in itself, we have no help at all. Where a certain sort of life is offered as exemplary, and another is offered as a cautionary tale, we have at least some sort of guideline, and there is then at least the implication within a culture that some real world exists beyond the realm of choice, a landscape in which choice takes place.

For this reason it makes good sense, it is even an obligation, to hate what our children are offered by this culture. We are hurt by the fact that saints mean less to us now than they did in previous ages. It didn't help, though, that when they were offered to us as models, they were offered in ways that minimized their struggles, not showing us Jerome's problem with anger, Augustine's problem with patience (it is my opinion that he never had enough interesting problems

"If I forgive you, next thing you know, I'll have to forgive everyone."

with lust to make him very helpful in that over-advertised Augustinian realm), or Therese's problem with depression. It is also helpful to know how much Jerome and Augustine disliked each other.

They struggled against the passions—against the things that rule and take us over, and take some of our brothers and sisters in Christ up into planes where they kill each other and then themselves. Clarity comes with some distance from those things that move us, more than from identification with them. This goes against the grain of a lot of pop-psychology, which would have us give vent to anger, allow us our outrages, ask for honesty in the expression of feeling. Honesty in the identification of feeling is certainly essential. It is important to look at what anger does at some specific place in the center of our chests, and watch what happens there carefully.

But that feeling is, putting it mildly, not to be trusted as a guide to behavior. It is also important not to worry too much about it, as a presence; and to seek too deeply into the sources of anger can be a form of narcissism, though to avoid looking at all at those sources can be a form of unhealthy and destructive denial.

The point is that the passions—the things that move us—are not to be seen as having an automatic claim to authenticity, to being sources of a kind of emotional authority. They are to be noticed, not denied; we have to see the gravitational field they generate, and see it calmly. They are not evil, but they can lead us into evil places, and we are not free, as it is our vocation to be, as long as we feel any compulsion, any drivenness. This freedom is the reason for asceticism, which is a struggle for clarity and not a denial of the flesh.

It could be argued that all human evil consists precisely in the denial of this freedom, everything from war to murder and suicide. One way of understanding evil is the recognition that something hates humankind and wants to see it destroyed. Our age, which exemplifies evil on a massive, genocidal scale, denies the reality of evil—which, as C. S. Lewis pointed out, is the devil's greatest victory. Something (I'm willing to call it Satan) wants us not to see that we are made in God's image. It is the deepest sort of horror, a terrifying denial of the deepest reality, when someone made in God's image puts a gun to the back of the head of another person made in God's image.

A fascination with evil, though, is another victory for evil. At the center of Christian faith is the fact that evil has been overcome, and death—by Christ's death—has been overcome. At the Paschal liturgy of the Orthodox church a baptismal sermon of St. John Chrysostom is read, and it is wonderful: "By descending into hell, he made hell captive. He embittered it when it tasted of his flesh...It was embittered, for it was abolished. It was embittered, for it was mocked. It was embittered, for it was slain. It was embittered, for it was overthrown. It was embittered, for it was fettered in chains. It took a body, and met God face to face. It took earth, and encountered heaven. It took that which was seen, and fell upon the unseen. O death, where is thy sting? O hell, where is thy victory? Christ is risen, and thou art overthrown. Christ is risen, and demons are fallen. Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen, and life reigns."

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RABBIT LOSES THE RACE

JOHN UPDIKE'S 'SMALL ANSWER OF A TEXTURE'

RAND RICHARDS COOPER

In everything he writes, John Updike creates sentences that carry the feeling of having been cared for, and indeed deeply enjoyed, by their creator. This stylistic exuberance seems to trouble his various detractors, who over the years have seen in him a *fin de siècle* aestheticism and, worse, a privileged complacency. Alfred Kazin called him "someone wholly literary...the quickest of quick children." More recently, Garry Wills's scathing and intemperate essay in the *New York Review of Books* [October 25, 1990] criticized Updike's "reactionary dandyism," and blasted his novels as "profligate with pretty writing." Updike, we are told, is all medium and no message, a man who writes beautifully about nothing. This faintly *ad hominem* strain of criticism, having pursued Updike over the years, has been paralleled by powerful and repeated doses of official critical tribute as well, including the 1991 Pulitzer Prize—Updike's second for the quartet of novels about Harry Angstrom of Pennsylvania, better known as Rabbit. Even after fifteen novels and ten short-story collections, Updike continues to elicit reactions as passionate as his prose style.

Rabbit, Run, published in 1960, was the precocious twenty-seven-year-old author's fourth book, and took up the life of the twenty-six-year-old Rabbit, a former high-school basketball star who, dismayed by the drab responsibilities of adulthood (he works demonstrating a kitchen gadget called the MagiPeel Peeler), briefly deserts his pregnant wife and young son to live with a prostitute. This act of irresponsibility sets off a series of painful events culminating in the accidental bathtub drowning of his infant daughter. Rabbit flees from this, too; the memorable last pages see him running, "in a kind of sweet panic," away from her funeral. The novel was originally meant to be bound together with a succeeding work, *The Centaur*, "to illustrate the polarity [Updike has explained] between running and plodding, between the rabbit and the horse, between the life of instinctual gratification and that of dutiful self-sacrifice."

Surprisingly, a rereading of *Rabbit, Run* turns up not only the fine-tuned writing Updike is often praised for, but plenty of bad writing as well: awkward and jumbled metaphor; needless alliteration ("...a small rhododendron clothed in a pink of penetrating purity"); cluttered "interior" run-ons; and, particularly in passages devoted to sexual relations, a good measure of mystical nonsense ("His sea of seed buckles, and sobs into a still channel..."). Set among these excesses are fine passages, well-tuned to the young Rabbit's fitful intentions and moods. One would be hard put, for instance, to find a better evocation of the frustrations of a young husband than this:

> [Rabbit's] wish to make love to Janice is like a small angel to which all afternoon tiny lead weights are attached. The baby squawks tirelessly. It lies in its crib all afternoon and makes an infuriating noise of strain, *hnnnnnnah ah ah nnnnh*, a persistent feeble scratching at some interior door. What does it want? Why won't it sleep? He has come home from church carrying something precious for Janice and keeps being screened from giving it to her. The noise spreads fear through the apartment....The tiny soft marbled body, weightless as paper, goes stiff against his chest and then floppy, its hot head rolling as if it will unjoint from its neck. "Becky, Becky, Becky," he says, "go to sleep. Sleep, sleep, sleep."

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There was plenty of sex in *Rabbit, Run*, but mere sex was not what Rabbit—or what Updike—was after. Like its hero, the novel itself is "bothered by God," persistently rummaging about for some sort of transcendent experience upon which to fasten its devotional urges. It is no coincidence that Ruth, the woman Rabbit flees to, lives next to a church; and that Rabbit, rising from their bed on a Sunday morning, enjoys watching the congregation file out into the sunshine. What Rabbit knows of God's grace, Updike suggests, he knows through his exploits on the court and on the golf course, where he approaches perfection, and his exploits in bed, where he touches bliss.

There was considerable shrewdness, in 1960, in a novelist's taking God out of the church and putting him on the golf course, where so many suburban men were already spending their Edenic Sundays. Updike leads Rabbit through a series of golf games with Jack Eccles, a youthful Episcopalian minister who, trying to persuade Rabbit to do the right thing and return to his wife and family, begins instead to be tempted by Rabbit's urge to do the wrong and irresponsible thing, by his yearning intimation, as he gestures toward the town's dreary landscape, that "somewhere behind this...there's something that wants me to find it." On the back nine Eccles subjects the derelict husband to a theological interrogation. This "something" Rabbit is missing, he asks, what is it exactly? Rather than attempting to describe God's grace, Rabbit tees off and hits a rare, perfect drive. As it falls "with a kind of visible sob," he turns triumphantly to the minister and says, "That's it!"

One can imagine the kind of wicked fun another kind of writer—Vonnegut, say, or Joseph Heller—could have had with the notion that God lives in a wooden driver, and that the man wielding it does so with a mystic motion of faith. But *Rabbit, Run* was not satire. Beneath the active wit of its surface, it took its religion very seriously, refusing to release us into farce, even when one felt a strong need to be released. When Rabbit watches the Mousketeer show on TV and finds himself deeply inspired by one of Mousketeer leader Jimmy's singing proverbs—"God doesn't want a tree to be a waterfall, or a flower to be a stone, God gives to each one of us a special talent..."—our laughter is again checked by a confusing sense that something much like Jimmy's message forms the hook upon which the novel earnestly hangs its meaning.

In his 1989 memoirs, *Self-Consciousness*, Updike writes of "something intrinsically and individually vital [in each of us] which must be defended against the claims even of virtue." *Rabbit, Run* can be seen as Updike's attempt, three decades earlier, to deploy this vital something and defend it against the gray conformity of the 1950s, with its cult of "mature" behavior. Theological assistance appears in the figure of Kruppenbach, a grim neo-orthodox Lutheran minister who, in contemptuously dismissing Eccles's hands-on, humanistic counseling of Rabbit, echoes the hard Christian message Updike himself has been drawn to in the writings of Karl Barth. "There is your role: to make yourself an exemplar of faith," Kruppenbach thunders at the cowering Eccles. "[O]n Sunday morning, when we go before their faces, we must walk up not worn out with misery but full of Christ, *hot* with Christ, on *fire*: burn them with the force of our belief." Though Updike later called the book an attempt to frame a moral dilemma by "making a case for running away from your wife," his sympathy was clearly with his hero; throughout the novel, objections to Rabbit's irresponsibility are mown down as one character after another bows to his "strange gift...for life," and ethical arguments are revealed as a kind of spiritual bludgeon by which the weak (women, primarily, and "womanish" ministers) keep the strong down.

If these Nietzschean flirtations seem somewhat dated today, it is perhaps because the case for leaving one's wife, or one's husband, has been made so often since 1960, and in such unheroic circumstances, that it is difficult to encounter it as a source of spiritual inspiration. What remains vivid, however, is the novel's portrait of a young man's nervous and changeable inner being—now teetering with euphoria at the splendor of life, now recoiling in dread at the fact of death.

Many readers have complained of inconsistencies in Rabbit Angstrom, whose exquisite sensibility ("The girls waiting under crimson neon have a floral delicacy; like a touch of wilt the red light rims their fluffy hair...") is indeed hard to square with his blue-collar grittiness ("Oh, she can take care of herself," Rabbit says of his girlfriend. "She didn't expect nothing."); Garry Wills calls this "foisting onto this 'middle American' of Updike's own preciosity" an "egregious flaw in the depiction of Harry."

And yet the novel is not merely the depiction of a "middle American" but of a state of spiritual crisis. Asked by Eccles to explain why he thinks his personal destiny so important, Rabbit answers, "It's just that, well, it's all there is. Don't you think?" Updike's task, here as in the autobiographical essays of *Self-Consciousness*, is to reconcile this solipsism with a reverential instinct, a strong urge toward God. The way he tries to do it is through his lyrical and richly descriptive prose. In praise of the created world, Updike's "preciosity" and his hero's converge. Consider the following moment, early in the novel, when Rabbit leaves the house with his wife to pick up their son, Nelson.

> Outdoors it is growing dark and cool. The Norway maples exhale the smell of their sticky new buds and the broad living-room windows along Wilbur Street show beyond the silver patch of a television set the warm bulbs burning in kitchens, like fires at the back of caves. He walks down hill. The day is gathering itself in. He now and then touches with his hand the rough bark of a tree or the dry twigs of a hedge, *to give himself the small answer of a texture* [italics mine].

The inconsistencies of Harry are not simply a "foisting" or a "flaw." They arise, rather, out of a tension between "realistic"

Books Discussed in this article

Rabbit, Run, *Knopf, 1960.*
Rabbit Redux, *Knopf, 1971.*
Rabbit Is Rich, *Knopf, 1981.*
Rabbit at Rest, *Knopf, 1990.*
Self-Consciousness, *Knopf, 1989.*

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and religious purposes. The "answer of texture" defines a kind of faith through sensibility; Rabbit's susceptibility to bliss, his ability to be made "perfect in joy" by the cidery smell of a field in autumn, is his way of fulfilling the challenge to "burn...with the force of belief"—and his author's way to execute the ancient biblical function of praise.

A reader of the four Rabbit books confronts a steadily increasing bulk. The novels, each longer than its predecessor, are crammed with the furniture of Harry Angstrom's daily consciousness. Nothing is thrown away. Thus we learn, for example, that the ingredients of a TV dinner include (among twenty-three other substances) cysteine and gum arabic; that the news anchorman Peter Jennings betrays his Canadianness in his pronunciation of the word "about" ("aboot"); that a Sky Bar consists of "five different gooey fillings in...five humped segments of pure chocolate"; that *Consumer Reports* rates the ten-cup Krups coffeemaker over the twelve-cup Braun; that the Philadelphia Eagles quarterback of the mid-1970s was Ron Jaworski; that the fruit of the tropical dynamite tree, *Hura crepitans*, explodes when ripe. And on and on and on, until at times Rabbit's overburdened life seems like the monomaniacal production of some *idiot savant*.

Updike has written admiringly of nineteenth-century realism, and one finds in his fiction some of the movement's guiding principles: its impartiality and inclusiveness; its careful inspection of individual destinies and desires against the large backdrop of society; its insistence on the importance of what Henry James called "the common, the immediate, the familiar" as opposed to "surprising and incongruous phenomena"; its fondness for comprehensive detailing of the stuff of daily life; and, above all, its sure sense that a real, objective actual world exists, and that the full powers of the writer should be turned not to remaking but to recording it, as truthfully and as completely as possible. Against modernism's (and postmodernism's) emphasis on the subjective and idiosyncratic, its preference for the partial, occluded view, and its romantic sense of the writer's godlike creativity, Updike has set himself squarely in the tradition of Theodore Dreiser and W.D. Howells, calling a writer "a rapt witness to the world...an instrument, whereby a time and place make their mark." The torrent of pedestrian realities he lets loose through the Rabbit books is his attempt to "do" America; or, as Dreiser vowed over *Sister Carrie*, to "get it all in!"

But Updike is a twentieth-century writer, for whom the exalted optimism of nineteenth-century positivism is not an option. The roots of his realism lie not in science or utilitarianism but in the rockier ground of religion and faith. Absent is any complacent optimism that the world can be improved; instead, Updike's writing flickers with the hope that the world was created, and thus merits the devotion of description. "Imitation is praise," he writes in *Self-Consciousness*; "description expresses love." Unlike the fiction of his nineteenth-century mentors, Updike's realism is grounded in a reverential attitude, and expresses itself in explicitly devotional terms. Fear of death powers it like a motor. "My mind when I was a boy of ten or eleven," he writes in his memoirs,

> sent up its silent screams at the thought of future aeons—at the thought of the cosmic party going on without me. The yearning for an afterlife is the opposite of selfish: it is love and praise for the world that we are privileged, in this complex interval of light, to witness and experience.

Far from being complacent or untroubled, Updike's prolific descriptiveness arises out of spiritual anxiety. Increasingly, his Rabbit novels have the feel of a time capsule—of carefully collected daily realities sanctified by a knowledge that daily life will one day cease to be. As a kind of hedge against nothingness, the novels bulge with the efforts of a man desperate to get as much of the world in before it's too late. "The self," Updike writes, "is a window on the world we can't bear to think of shutting."

Rabbit Redux (1971) seems today the weakest of the Harry Angstrom quartet, a lurid, confused novel in which the author stumbles off the thoroughfare of his hero's spiritual life into a series of dead ends. Incongruous phenomena form the spine of its plot. Rabbit, now thirty-six, has become a paunchy conservative busy defending Johnson's and Nixon's war against his wife, Janice, and other misguided liberals. Temporarily abandoned by Janice, Rabbit takes up with a highly unlikely duo: Jill, a wealthy hippie drug addict, and Skeeter, a hip black revolutionary. Improbably, Harry decides to invite these all-too-emblematic sixties figures into his home, where the three conduct, before the eyes of Rabbit's bewildered son Nelson (now fourteen), an experiment in radical realities featuring liberal doses of weed, lengthy readings from Frederick Douglass, tedious harangues and counterharangues on American imperialism, violent outbursts of racial, sexual, and class antagonisms, and the occasional *ménage à trois*.

All of this was an attempt to handle an era Updike would later describe in his memoirs as a "poisonous" time. Indeed, *Redux*'s operative metaphors are of corruption—the "sweetly stinking" sewers of Rabbit's carelessly engineered neighborhood, the "chemical sludge" of a vanilla shake he drinks, the "rot" and "black madness" of campus riots. But the novel itself seems tainted as well by a vindictive authorial agenda of gripes and fears. *Redux* is the work of an angry man who lets his main character do his tough talking for him.

In an essay in *Self-Consciousness*, "On Not Being a Dove," Updike looks back two decades to anatomize the sputtering anger he often felt during the late sixties when, alone among his circle of suburban liberals, he supported the Vietnam War. Like Jill in *Redux*, Updike's wife's friends, "pale" and "bleached," seem spiritually anemic, drained of some vital life force. Both the essay and the novel suggest an outburst of contempt for the "genteel bohemian" lifestyle in which Updike found himself involved in the late sixties, surrounded, as he saw himself, by "privileged members of a privileged nation [who] believed that their enviable position could be maintained without anything visibly ugly happening in the world."

Still too hemmed in by liberal proprieties to utter these dark sentiments himself, Updike called in Harry Angstrom to do the job. The result was a novel that seems driven by a longing on

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the author's part to reach down out of his bourgeois decadence and shake hands with Rabbit's blue-collar, conservative toughness. An unseemly air of savage satisfaction surrounds Rabbit's most vile behavior. But the ultimate violence of *Redux* is directed at the reader, who, along with Rabbit, is subjected to endless ideological tirades that pour in vast volumes of tedium from the mouths of Jill and Skeeter. With annoyance we begin to suspect that our sense of being trapped is exactly the point—that the author, who writes in his memoirs of feeling angered by the sixties' refusal to let him ignore politics, intends to browbeat us with politics until we, too, share his furious discomfort.

Rabbit Is Rich (1981), a persuasive return to the themes of Harry Angstrom's inner life, presented a Rabbit grown fat and happy with success. The 1970s have been kind to Harry. Now in his midforties, he has taken over his father-in-law's Toyota dealership; he and Janice, again reconciled, vacation in the Poconos and the Caribbean, and spend their ample leisure time at the country club. Where the key metaphors of *Redux* were poison and rot, *Rich* addresses the inflation and scarcity of the Carter years and the midseventies' fear that the world, as the novel's opening line asserts, is running out of gas. Rabbit, too, experiences a kind of "inner dwindling," his spiritual desires waning as his waistline has grown. "God [has] shrunk in Harry's middle years," Updike writes, "to the size of a raisin lost under the car seat." Far from being disturbed by this, Rabbit is comforted. The wisdom of middle age has turned his energies to real things, things that can not only be seen but, better, bought and sold. This is a novel of a medium-rich man whose favorite hobby—literally—is counting his gold.

Anchoring Rabbit's spiritual life snugly in harbor, the novel—alone among the four Rabbit books—secures itself for sustained comedy. In its best moments, *Rabbit Is Rich* is a fond and spirited satire of the *nouveau riche*. Notable is a scene in which Harry and Janice carry seventy-five pounds' worth of freshly purchased gold coins from the coin store to the bank, clutching their sacks of treasure in apprehension as they pass

Robert J. Oberg

Hard Love

For Rhode Island Hospital

"If two make peace with each other in a single house,
they will say to the mountain, 'Move!' and it will move."
—The Gospel of Thomas

I. Anesthesia and Surgical Waiting Room

He rocks our son to natural sleep
before setting the dials
that will send him past sense and memory.
You cry as we leave—
It is out of our hands.
We do not think of the skin-flap
pulled slowly back from ear to ear,
the bone-channel cut so close
to where skull cleaves to brain.
We have seen it already,
the knife path Dagi traced
over a skull once guillotined
by Robespierre,
seen it sudden and unbidden
jammed in highway traffic,
the hard love of Dagi's hand
on Will's head.
"What a beautiful child,"
he had said, lifting his eyes,
making sure we understood.
It is out of our hands.
You knit a sweater for his next Christmas,
while I read the Gospel of Thomas.

II. Recovery

outside the recovery room
tubes curl over him
in the oxygen tent
his body puffed and unearthly
floating as in those early space walks
drifting above
the heaving and the hard love
of this dying planet

he will make it
our son orbiting the hidden universe
his quiet crackling over distant radio
he will splash down
into the rolling sea of himself
he will be William

III. Pediatric Intensive Care

Your practiced hands untangle his lifelines
so I can rock him amid the digital whir.
Twelve years in PIC could not
prepare you for our son's head
blossomed nearly
to the size of our own,
eyelids pressed closed,

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assorted down-and-outers. Rabbit's gold arouses him, and his wife too; in a particularly devilish passage, the two of them put several shiny new Krugerrands Harry has bought to a highly unusual use. This is a comedy of fetishism, the visible standing in for the invisible, gold as love. When his son, now a college drop-out, smashes up Rabbit's car and then whines, "Dad, it's just a thing; you're looking like you lost your best friend," we sympathize with Rabbit's intuition that "things" are far more helpful friends than the boy imagines.

Beneath this playful comedy of getting and spending, however, lies an accumulating bleakness. On the golf course Harry is plunged into depression at the thought that "every blade of grass at his feet is an individual life that will die, that has flourished to no purpose." The passage recalls the young Rabbit's naive belief in the tree and the stone and in God's gift of "special talents." For a reader it is satisfying to hear this echo, cast forth over two decades and three novels, and posing, in the devolution of a metaphor, something like a life change. No such solace is afforded Harry, however, who finds that not even a game of golf can rouse him from his existential gloom. "When he was younger and just taking up the game," Updike has him reflect, "...there were shots that seemed like a miracle, straight as an edge of glass and longer than any power purely his could have produced, and it was for the sake of collaboration with this angel that he kept playing."

Nowadays, however, he no longer hits these miraculous shots, and the game has become "more like work...a matter of approximations in the realm of the imperfect."

That golf has lost its metaphysical function is a sign of how grave things soon will become in Harry's world. Presentiments of his mortality swirl through the latter half of *Rabbit Is Rich* (the family used to worry about him running away; now, when he takes up jogging, they worry about his heart). His running quarrel with Nelson, his wish to deny the boy a job at the car lot, turns out to be more than a wish to get his son out on his own. It is a struggle for dynastic succession; in Rabbit's peevish anxieties Updike successfully explores the paradox of heredity, by which one is both perpetuated and replaced, the success of the son proving

those small bruised features
obscured in morphine dark.
"You're going to make it," I whisper,
still shocked by the arc of stitches
that lace his watery skull
like a tattered softball.
"You're doing great my good friend."

IV. The Names of Children

You tell me the boy next to us
was born with his stomach outside.
His red and purple skin glows
under the heat lamp
like clusters of ripening grapes.

Across from us a girl
has her Adam's apple opened up.
A trach snakes down
into her listless lungs.
None of these other children will splash down
like William
into a sea of balanced cells.
I hear their names *Jeffrey* and *Ricky*,
Elizabeth and *Rosie*
uttered on the darkness
of their parents' tongues.

"William," I whisper, lowering my head.
"William. William."
His face glows ghostly in thankful light.

V. Emergency Code

The nurse in you stiffens
as the alarm sounds. You settle back
into your mother's skin
as seven bodies rush around
a still three-month-old girl.
May their God help them,
the whirring and the clicking,
those bodies heaving as in childbirth
or hard love.
May their God be with them
when the mountain will not move,
will not budge for the dying
and the loving
for the dripping of blood and water
from crucified bags
for the woman's hands cupped
to a beatless heart. May He be
in those hands
so that all those questions
they've saved through sleepless nights
will go unasked in the light.
May they float like spacemen in His Love
so that the heaving of their bodies,
the blessed care of small stony lives
will mean more
than all the hard love
this dying planet can provide.

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the mortality of the father. The novel closes on a note of bleak wit, as Harry, presented with an infant granddaughter, holds his son's baby in his lap and sees in her "another nail in his coffin."

Each of us, Updike remarked in *Self-Consciousness*, owes God a death. *Rabbit at Rest*, published last fall, is a 512-page account of that final and ineluctable transaction, and seems like the novel Updike has been waiting all his career to write. Now in his midfifties, Harry, jowly and sluggish, gorges on junk food and tries to ignore continuing bad news from somewhere within his chest, where he feels "as if a child inside him is playing with lighted matches." Although Rabbit, signing a check, can still feel like "a god casually dispensing thunderbolts," it is a rare moment, for the novel is a chronicle of his steady disempowerment. Health, work, and eventually even the purse-strings are taken away from him as Nelson assumes control at the car lot and Updike packs his ailing hero off to a series of locations wittily listed in the table of contents under the chapter headings FL, PA, and MI—witty because MI, Rabbit's ultimate destination, is not Michigan.

Fittingly, Harry's destiny catches up to him on a basketball court, returning him to where he started. (Admirers of the novel will note that Garry Wills, in his haste to condemn, confuses this crucial scene with another one hundreds of pages earlier.) Updike, too, has come back to where he started, to a battle with faith and death. Harry obsesses about the Lockerbie air disaster, about the declining powers of baseball players and the deaths of TV personalities. In Florida, where he and Janice have a condo, he notes that palm trees grow by dropping their dying lower branches; that friendships have a provisional quality since people "might at any minute...up and die." The music at the airport, where he goes to pick up Nelson and his family, is "a kind of carpet in the air, to cover up a silence that might remind you of death," and the innocent prospect of seashells on the beach reminds him of the "blobby hungry sluggy creatures" who once inhabited them, "eating each other, drilling through shells, sucking each other's guts out" in "a murky cold world halfway to death."

Rabbit at Rest peddles a vicarious mortality, giving the reader the vision of a man who looks out at a world in which he soon will not exist. Step by step, Harry's family unconsciously prepares itself to survive him, his wife and son making decisions about the family business that leave him out of the loop. Janice enrolls in real-estate courses, fires a laggard accountant at the car lot, and begins to emerge, "energized [and] businesslike," from two decades of country club indolence. Harry, who can't help noticing that she has begun now and then to talk about him in the past tense, admires her newfound competence, yet senses in it a preparation for widowhood, and a rather brisk and happy one at that. In a neat irony, the last quarter of the novel has Harry abruptly driving off to Florida, reenacting his original flight from responsibility. Thirty years earlier, his world was shattered by his departure. This time, nothing happens. The family continues to function. Even irresponsibility eludes Harry; the prelude to death, he discovers, is inconsequentiality.

Rabbit at Rest is not only a book about facing death, but about doing it, as Updike makes Rabbit, without benefit of faith. Harry's hapless preoccupation with junk food—eating is to this novel what counting gold was to the last—and the novel's grim glee in totting up the continuing orgy of toxins, seems a rebuke to the very idea of a soul. The novel deals obdurately in the physical realities of the body, revealing the heart to be not the seat of desire but the sputtering engine of a "soft machine." There is a harrowing sequence in which Harry undergoes an angioplasty in an attempt to clear out his coronary arteries. As the doctors crouch murmuring over him, Harry looks at an X-ray monitor where his heart appears as a "twitching pale-gray ghost" toward which a catheter moves "in little cautious jerky stabs...hard-edged as a gun." Closing his eyes to pray, he finds he cannot: "it feels like a wrong occasion, there is too much crowding in, of the actual material world."

All of this would seem to bear out Updike's own description of *Rabbit at Rest* as a "depressed book about a depressed man, written by a depressed man." Indeed, for the dying Harry Angstrom, the realization that the whole world, himself included, is merely "material" triggers a depressed sense of "stifling uselessness," and snuffs out prayer. He dies without consolation. And yet, for a reader, the consolations of the novel are many. Here is Rabbit, waking from a nap and chancing to recall, as he looks out the window, other window screens in an apartment he and Janice lived in years earlier:

> They never precisely fit, leaving splinters of light through which the mosquitoes and midges could crawl....Tragedy lay in a certain filtered summer breath they admitted, the glint of sun along segments of the mesh, an overlooked fervor in their details—the bent screening, the sliding adjustable frame stamped with the manufacturer's name, the motionless molding of the window itself, like the bricks that all through Brewer loyally hold their pattern though the masons that laid them long ago are dead.

Detractors will surely continue to find this kind of writing trivial and sentimental—beautiful writing about nothing—while others will appreciate the satisfactions of an actual world accurately observed; and, perhaps, the seductive tug of memory, transforming experience into something ineffably precious.

Similarly, the novel transforms the bleakness of death, rendering its depressing realities in a way that is anything but depressing. The black comedy of Harry's gluttony, which persists despite repeated doctorly warnings, is told with a wicked and miserable delight, as Harry again and again breaks down before the lovingly detailed attractions of Planter's Peanut bars, Double-Stuffed Oreos, Doritos, and fried shrimp; all the while "hat[ing] himself, with a certain relish"—a relish that the reader shares. At the airport, Harry buys a candy bar, ostensibly for his soon-to-arrive grandchildren; caving in, he eats half of it, and decides to save the other half for the kids.

But the first half is so good he eats the second and even dumps the sweet crumbs out of the wrapper into his palm and with his tongue licks them all up like an anteater. Then he thinks of going back and buying another for his grandchildren and him to share in the car—"look what Grandpa has!" as they turn onto Interstate 75—but doesn't trust himself not to eat it all and makes himself

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stand and look out the window instead.

The partnership with death details an intimate secrecy the reader is privileged to share. For Harry, the path toward cardiac disaster is strewn with illicit satisfactions: noticing someone sicker than he is, and liking him for it; hanging around the kitchen, after his daughter serves him a low-cholestoral frozen yogurt dessert, to stuff himself with "three quick vanilla cookies and a broken pretzel"; fingering the bottle of nitroglycerin pills in his pocket and looking forward to the "cute little rush" of "inner loosening" they give him—made more delicious, it turns out, by a Nutter-Butter cookie and a big glass of milk. Even the morbid messages of Harry's heart are converted, through the tribute of description, into a readerly pleasure:

> At times it seems a tiny creature, a baby, pleading inside him for attention, for rescue, and at others a sinister intruder, a traitor muttering in code, an alien parasite that nothing will expel. The pains, when they come, seem hostile and deliberate, the knives of a strengthening enemy.

Rabbit at Rest should be seen as the final campaign in a losing battle for faith, bespeaking substantial spiritual gloom not only for Rabbit, but, one senses, for his creator as well. And yet against this "depressed" reality must be set the exhilarations of a prose that continues to take the world, despite all doubt and gloominess, as an object worthy of praise. In an essay on Proust, Updike described the French writer as "one of those rare men...who lost the consolations of belief but retained the attitudes and ambitions of a worshiper." So, too, with Updike himself, a writer who has substituted for transcendental reassurances the small answers of texture, mastering the artistic paradox by which even deathly realities are redeemed in the vivid life of prose.

> The remorseless pessimism of Proust's disquisitions on the heart [Updike writes], the abyss he makes of human motives, the finality of all our little deaths, did not appall me....In the interminable rain of his prose, I felt goodness.

TO DIE IN NEW ORLEANS

REFLECTIONS AT WALKER PERCY'S GRAVE

MICHAEL O'LAUGHLIN

I recently came face to face with Walker Percy, or what remains of him. Percy died last May and is buried in Louisiana. Since I have learned to appreciate Louisiana almost entirely through his writings, it was for me an appropriate meeting indeed.

I came to Louisiana to attend a series of theological conferences, the first a small gathering, the second an enormous megameeting of six thousand brought together in the largest hotels of New Orleans. This annual meeting of scholars of religion, although highly stimulating, is also predictably marred by careerism and commercialism; it is a place where business is conducted, contracts are signed, job interviews scheduled, and one's sensibilities consequently assaulted. Theologians are at their worst when trying to make points in this sea of tweed.

I stayed at a Benedictine monastery for the smaller gathering. Each year a group of us meets to discuss ascetical practices in just such a monastic setting, fortifying ourselves before entering the "Sea of Tweed." Asceticism, as we define it, is that point where religion intensifies, touches down, "practifies." Asceticism is to theology as root is to plant and leaf—it is the thorny, heavy, solid part. Just as the ascetic withdraws from society to achieve detachment, we scholars depart from the Sheraton and the Marriott to achieve our separateness, our own point of intense contact.

So I found myself in St. Joseph's Abbey in the swampy woods of Louisiana. It was a romantic moment; to my mind New Orleans remains the least assimilated of American cities, a place dark and riotous, tropical and latinate, a polar opposite certainly to the puritanical, Irish Boston where I make my home. But New Orleans is the polar opposite to almost any other American city as well. It is simply too French, too hot, charming, and sexual to be a real part of this most corn-fed, vigorous, and Protestant of countries.

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Louisiana, as I have known it through the writings of Percy, plus occasional supplements from the more sonorous and dated Faulkner, or the saucy, sarcastic John Kennedy O'Toole, is a study in sensuality, a place of fecundity and decay, a city of canals, old streets, overgrown plots, flamboyant music, Catholicism, and striptease.

At the heart of this mental description lies a fundamental paradox: the positive force of religion can be tangled and, yes, supported by outright sinful revelry and a mass of unredeemed purposes and enthusiasms. Thus perhaps have Catholic cities always appeared to their northern visitors. I think for example of the erotic and primal allure of Italy in Thomas Mann's *A Death in Venice*, or E.M. Forster's *A Room with a View*. The Catholic religion contributes to the sense of colorful intensity of such a city, for, unlike the message of careful aloofness from society that is transmitted in Protestantism, the "Catholic gospel" has always connected itself to previous paganisms; this church has not stood apart from society since the time of Constantine.

Not that Percy is a writer of local scope only. He describes the country rather than the city, but in his flawed characters there is an assessment of the natural forces of life that I do not find elsewhere. There is in Percy a wise reckoning, a knowledge of deep things, a realization that most of life, philosophy, and religion boil down to the yearnings of organic matter for transcendence and resurrection. It is this organic, but still critical, Augustinian note in Percy that makes him so Catholic. All flesh is grass, our yearnings after wisdom, righteousness, and immortality are powerfully offset by the pulsings of life, the throb of sexuality, our own sense of displacement and propensity to evil. Inevitably, there is the drawing down of age and death.

Nowhere is this expressed more cannily than in Percy's deceptively simple philosophical essay, *Lost in the Cosmos, the Last Self-Help Guide*. This book provides enough critical insight into the human condition to last a lifetime. As a literary piece, it is droll, witty, quickly tossed down, like frothy beer. But this yeasty draught is then absorbed and yields many deep and nourishing insights as one's life develops, sometimes along lines predicted by Percy.

Could Percy have learned the lessons he has taught us in his novels and essays if he had lived elsewhere than in Louisiana? I wonder if there is not something about that place that contributed to his genius. St. Joseph's Abbey, where he is buried, would appear to be an eloquent witness to the special spirit of this locale. Monasteries can be rather severe places, but this abbey is decorated with huge frescos, all executed by the Dutch monk-artist, Gregory Dewitt. The paintings in the church are impressive, but they pale in power beside those of the refectory, that second center of community life. It is in this private, inner place that the frescos climb the walls and ceiling in a riotous explosion of tropical color and Christian imagery. The figures represented, from Adam and Eve to the Good Shepherd, are drawn in an intense style, at once magical and realistic. Distortion is there, along with a reverence for detail. It is the only art I have seen by a Catholic in America that combines strong color and distorted, somewhat surreal figures to produce the same effects as a Byzantine icon. I try to imagine this refectory elsewhere in the country and simply cannot picture it. These frescos fit in this swampy, Latin piece of our country where life and death are both so vivid and flow so closely together.

Percy, of course, writes frequently of death, and New Orleans is to my mind a city of death. It is the only American city where the smell of vegetation, food, sewage, and decay unite with sights and sound to convince the heart that life is built on death. It is no accident that the signature song of the city, "When the Saints Go Marching In," that bawdy, colorful rag, was written to be played in a funeral procession.

Percy fits this city where the saints go marching in; I am sure that if Percy or O'Toole had anything to do with it, that procession of the holy ones would be led by all the broken-down, sinful, normal, and not-so-normal people of their novels, with a drunk

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or a mental case leading the parade. Percy's Catholicism, acquainted with sorrow, familiar with failings and yet confident in God, belongs and connects in that swampy, beautiful place.

I found Percy's grave a few thousand feet out into the woods from the Benedictine refectory with its vivid frescos. It's little more than a pile of dirt in the woods, marked only by a small bronze plate with name and dates. A small anthill has formed at a point right above Percy's heart. There at St. Joseph's you are far from the formal, above-ground vaults where the dead of New Orleans lie ringing their city. I am somewhat surprised that Percy did not choose to lay his body down among those other, more worldly mortals, as a final act of solidarity with the humanity he spent his life puzzling over and describing. I am sure there is a final lesson in his decision to lie among the monks. It is an ascetic choice, a drawing apart. As I look at this grave, for me death comes closer, is less abstract, more real. The early monks haunted the cemeteries, as if to show that *they* had died to this world. Evagrius Ponticus's fourth-century treatise, *Rerum monachalium rationes*, insists that a monk think on the moment he will die every day of his life:

Sitting in your cell,
Collect your thoughts,
Remember the day of your death....

An ascetical lesson then of Percy, of Catholicism, of monasticism, and of New Orleans is that the presence of death gives life new vibrancy. This remarkable writer, with his unblinking and severe assessment of human beings, sees hope and salvation in their finitude. Likewise, that boisterous place, where the dead are trumpeted to their graves, is a city of life because it is a city of death. It is alive in a way unmatched by superior, Emersonian New England or my native California, with its vineyards and Disneylands. There is something holy, something profound there, beneath the *bon vivance*, and *I* would love to be in that number, when those saints rise up and begin to march.

SCREEN

HEAVEN WITHOUT HASSLES

BROOKS'S 'DEFENDING YOUR LIFE'

Watching Albert Brooks on screen is like watching a man have a creative, self-delighting anxiety attack. The fast-talking, covertly needling control-freak that Brooks plays to perfection, both in his own films (*Real Life, Lost in America*) and those directed by others (*Taxi Driver, Broadcast News*), sets the pace of each scene he's in. His jumpiness makes the other characters jump or else sit back in staring bewilderment at this one-man collection of urban tics and choked-back desires. Brooks's acting is not just something he does in addition to writing and directing. His acting in his own movies is the culmination of his writing and the most important tool of his directing. No one could play the demon neurotics Brooks writes as well as Brooks himself. His whines and incredulous smiles are the orchestral accompaniment for his dialogue. And the aggressions he perpetrates on his fellow actors are the lashes that make the crew row.

But in *Defending Your Life*, the taskmaster has turned into a genial host. This movie differs from Brooks's previous films in that the humor isn't rooted in his personality but in the basic situation (an adman is killed in an accident and arrives at a sort of celestial way station where he must justify his life in court before he can go on to a higher existence), the setting (Judgment City is nothing but a cozy composite of several sunbelt villages), and the bafflements inherent in any comedy about afterlife (how do you tip an otherworldly bellhop when there is no money in the Great Beyond?).

Brooks's relentless nervousness can no longer drive this action because often he is just an observer, especially in the trial scenes which are dominated by the wrangling attorneys. This is a brave departure for such a domineering performer. Unfortunately, it functions in this movie as a liability. Subduing the imp in himself, Brooks fails to instill it in anybody else.

In the first third of *Defending Your Life*, as adman Daniel Miller gets used to the idea of being dead and starts to enjoy himself, everything on screen charms the viewer. Cinematographer Allen Daviau gives the movie a spaciousness that well suits the spirit of instant gratification of a New Age paradise. Brooks's inventions are excellent: the soap operas on the hotel TV in which characters must revile each other not only for their past deeds but their past lives; the weather stations that can only endlessly relay the news that it's seventy-four degrees and clear all day, every day; the restaurants where huge, magically nonfattening portions are literally forced on the guests; the Past Life Pavilion, hosted by—Shirley MacLaine!

But when the main action begins, Daniel's defense of his life before two judges, the movie goes flat fast. Episodes of Daniel's earthly existence are shown on a movie screen in court, but these scenes are written and directed without flair. They might have been redeemed if Daniel, his lawyer (Rip Torn), and the prosecutor (Lee Grant) had provided a running, wisecracking commentary. We get instead humdrum episodes observed by the court in silence.

In his previous work, Brooks brought out the oddity of seemingly "normal," faceless people. The veterinary in *Real Life*, the casino manager and the employment counselor in the brilliant *Lost in America* (one of the two or three best comedies of the eighties), all revealed unexpected, buggy facets as they reacted to the aggressions of the Brooks persona. But, in *Defending*, with Brooks more subdued than usual, the other characters must pull more comic freight. Most of them aren't up to the job.

Rip Torn does the best work. His glib lawyer is both amusing and unsettling because his agreeableness seems to mask his knowledge of what is in store for his client. The gleam in his puckered, Nelson Rockefeller eyes is mysteriously eloquent and, for the pretrial scenes, Brooks gives Torn some good lines. The lawyer reveals that, on the universal scale of intelligence, earthly humans only rate as "little brains": "But if you could use more than 5 percent of your brains, you wouldn't want to be on earth."

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But the dialogue in the trial scenes is so lifeless that Torn starts to labor visibly, the way all good actors do when they are asked to supply the wit that their scripts lack. Lee Grant as the prosecutor endows her role with customary sleekness and no-nonsense intensity. But her work here is monochromatic.

Daniel learns that denial to a higher existence means only a return to earth for another chance to live decisively. (In Brooks's celestial court, pusillanimity seems to be the worst possible sin. By this odd criterion, Hitler must be in seventh heaven and Hamlet's soul would be thrown away after one quick inspection.) Brooks obviously realized that this wasn't enough to make the audience strain for the hero to win his case. So he invented a heroine, also on trial, with whom Daniel can fall in love. And this woman is so obviously headed for a higher existence that Daniel's return to earth would part the lovers forever. As this paragon, Meryl Streep continues her quest for comedy roles that will complement her triumphs in drama. Her quest will have to persist. Watching Streep toss her tresses and do from-the-gut, life-embracing laughs to flesh out what is no more than a notion of the scriptwriters is like watching an athlete do graceful side-bends and leg-stretches and then retire to the showers without ever getting on the field.

At one point, Brooks starts to become envious of the way Streep's judges are fawning over the perfection of her life, and our hopes are raised that Brooks, torn between love and jealousy, will take us on one of his masterly jags of comic self-destruction. But no, the moment passes and we have to settle for a couple of conventional love scenes.

The joke running through *Defending Your Life* is that the next world isn't much different from this world: It's just more of the same, without hassle. But Albert Brooks is the lyric poet of hassle. When he isn't dealing with the mundane hitches of ordinary life, he goes limp. RICHARD ALLEVA

STAGE

NOTHING TO SING ABOUT

'MISS SAIGON' HITS BROADWAY

The man sitting behind me at *Miss Saigon* greeted each musical number with sharp, exclamatory bursts of applause and the curtain calls of the principals with deep intakes of breath. I assume that his reactions were true aesthetic/emotional responses, but, having a suspicious nature, I wondered if perhaps both his and the general enthusiasm were not a product of the occasion rather than the work itself. There was so much will-it-or-won't-it-open publicity about the producer's difficulties in getting Equity approval for the leads he wanted (was there ever doubt in anyone's mind?) and the musical has been such a triumph in London that *Miss Saigon* has become the biggest presold hit in the history of Broadway. Like *Les Misérables*, the other Alan Boublil-Claude-Michel Schonberg megahit, *Miss Saigon* is going to be around for years, in New York and on the road, and is presumably going to bring joyful tears to a great many people. I cannot imagine that my still, small voice of doubt has any resonance amid the hoopla.

Miss Saigon is the story of a doomed love affair between Chris, an American marine who belatedly comes to see the ugly pointlessness of the raunchy life he has been living, and Kim, a Vietnamese village girl who belatedly comes to sell and save herself in the sleazy last days of the Saigon bar scene. They meet, fall in love, sing about being in love at great length, and are parted by circumstances—i.e., the last of the Americans getting the hell out of Saigon by helicopter (celebrated stage business) just before the city falls. Chris, who is too wimpy to be as genuinely self-absorbed as Lt. Pinkerton, suffers over the loss of Kim and then, apparently as an act of therapy, marries Ellen, the requisite American blonde needed for contrast on the return to the East. Kim survives by hook or unexplained crook and, true love being truer in Vietnam, remains convinced that Chris will come back for her and for the son he does not know he has. (The child actor gets tossed around like a beanbag and should be in bed long before the final curtain.) At the end, wanting to save her son even at her own expense (in act 1 she sang about dying for the boy), Kim shoots herself and thus sets up one of the most preposterous final tableaux I can remember having seen on stage. She dies prettily in Chris's arms while the other principals stand around looking properly shocked, except for the phlegmatic child who, if this were real life instead of stage life, would probably flip out at fourteen and kill his American parents.

But this *is* stage life. There is little real sense that this is the Vietnam that left so deep a wound on America. Implicit—and explicit in some of Chris's lyrics—is the idea that the Americans, coming to do good do only evil (ask the Kurds about that), but it is not the central subject of the piece. A photograph in the program suggests that an image of mixed-race Vietnamese children brought the composer and the librettist to the story, but that aspect of the work—despite or because of a filmed sequence of such children—seems purely exploitative here. I expect to see one of those kids turning up shortly on T-shirts like the starving child now known as Les Miz. The only real political content in the musical lies with the Engineer, the pimp-hustler played with a fine abrasiveness by Jonathan Pryce. Fueled by greed, he acts on the assumption that the whole world shares his view of human behavior, and his goal is to reach America, which he sees as his natural home and which he celebrates in "The American Dreams," a song about a materialistic heaven ("The Movie in My Mind," as one of the other songs is called) in which the most arresting image shows him having sex with a limo. Finally, however, all the ugly aspects of the time and the place are subsumed in the timeless, placeless love story.

The music consists primarily of romantic songs performed by Kim (Lea Salonga in fine voice) and Chris (Willy Falk, who seemed a bit nasal to me), together or alone, and by Ellen (Liz Callaway). Perhaps I was overcome by the situation, but the songs all sounded a lot alike to me, and some of Richard Maltby, Jr.'s American words were about as dumb as lyrics get: Ellen,

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at a high emotional moment being forced to sing about there being days like this, and the Chris-Kim duet about the "song on a solo saxophone." There are several vigorous and very similar talk-songs for the Engineer, and at least two big musical numbers, one of them replete with dance acrobats. There are occasional strains throughout that suggest that this is a musical about the East, but the score is as relentlessly Western if not as inventive as *Madame Butterfly*. I left the theater not humming, but muttering, "you are the sunshine, I am the moon," one of Kim's musical statements on the nature of their love, although I cannot understand why she could not have been the sunshine just as easily and he the moon. That I was baffled on this point (despite a liberal education which taught me that Renaissance poets loved the moon as woman—monthly changes and all that) probably explains why I found much of the show repetitious and a little foolish. For me, *Miss Saigon* was a miss in more ways than one, but do not take my word for it; if you've got a hundred bucks, go check it out for yourself. GERALD WEALES

MEDIA

THE FIRST 'MURRAY AWARDS'

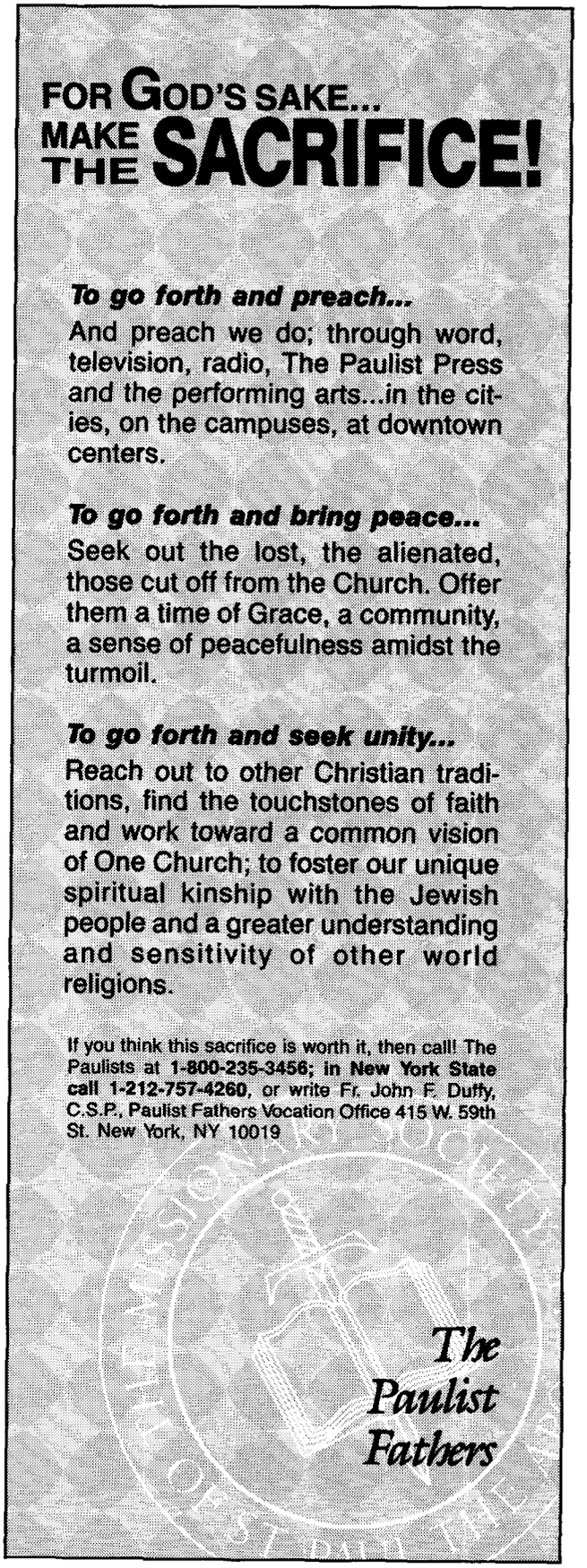
WINNERS & LOSERS

It's spring. Even in Southern California, where the passage of the seasons is about as dramatic as temperature gradations in a Holiday Inn lobby, it *feels* like spring. The air feels fresher, the birds sing more obnoxiously, the cattle on the hill behind my house are regarding one another with more than bovine interest, and—oh yeah—the TV season is grinding to a close. Spring, most archaic societies would agree, is the *real* new year, the beginning of new life—as Easter and Passover denote—and the time to look forward to new and richer life and take stock of the old one we have just come through.

The entertainment industry agrees with this mythic view of things. The Grammys, Emmys, and Oscars all cluster liturgically around this time of year: and why? Because those folks know that January 1 is an elegant fiction foisted upon the over-Christmassed, still-hungover consumer market, and that spring is the time when it really all begins again. "And the winner is...": does any ritual more clearly demarcate the transition from the old to the new?

So, in the spirit of the season, I'd like to announce the first annual springtime awards for the best and worst, silliest and most creative uses of TV. We all love awards and we all love lists, and there's a certain solemnity in giving them, a certain humanity even in saying, formally: "We have taken note of what you do—and it stinks."

For this year's awards, the polling process was easy: I was the nominating committee, the counter of the votes, and the donor of the awards. In years to come, I would hope that *Commonweal's* readers would feel free to send me, care of the magazine, their own nominations—with the understanding that they may or may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not have an effect on the final tally.

But what shall we call them? I thought of "Vladimirs," after Vladimir Zworykin, the man who invented the cathode ray tube and made the whole industry possible; or "Freddies," after Freddie Silverman, the *wunderkind* programmer of the seventies and eighties who made the whole industry infantile; or "Glass Teats," after the brilliant Harlan Ellison's term for the Tube in his own TV criticism. But Zworykin deserves more respect, Silverman is too much a paradox, and Harlan would be ticked off at me, and I *like* him.

So they are the Murray awards, named after my uncle who first, in 1948, rented a gigantic-console, five-inch screen TV for our house to watch the Kentucky high-school basketball finals, and changed my life forever. In line with my imagination, and Uncle Murray's personality, here are, in no special order and with no attempt at fairness, the Very First Murray Awards ever, for 1990-91.

The Never for God's Sake Listen to People Who Tell You You're a Genius award: To David Lynch, one of our most important directors, for letting "Twin Peaks" degenerate from maybe the most challenging thing ever on network TV into a cutesy-poo, and now essentially defunct, exercise in camera-winks for the Saturday (now Thursday) night Chablis and Brie set.

The You're a Genius, But Don't Pay Any Attention to It award: To Jeff Smith, PBS's "Frugal Gourmet," who week after week reminds us that the preparation of food is a sacramental act, who does it with deep and contagious love for the world's cultures whose food he prepares, and who does it with more real spontaneity and wit than Arsenio, Jay, and Johnny all together on their best day in the week.

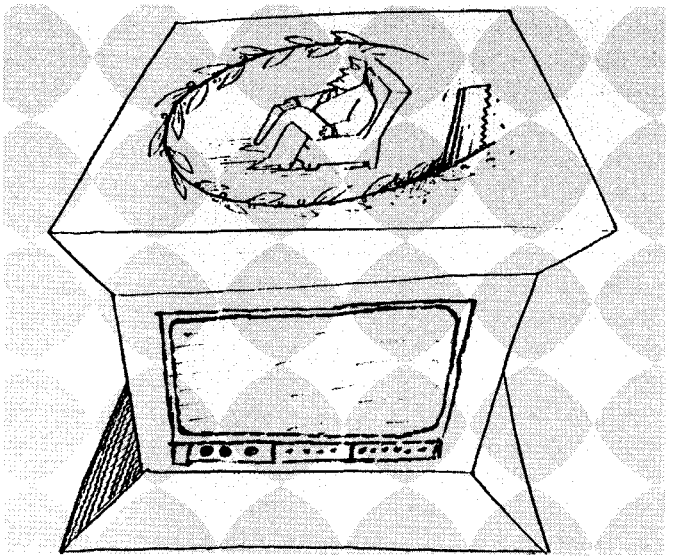
The Take the Money and Gloat award: To everybody connected with PBS's "Civil War" series, for getting monster ratings and a *Newsweek* cover out of a show that, using archaic film techniques and hyperventilating voice-over, conveyed to a stunned America the breathless message, "Gee—ain't war *awful*?"

The Take the Money and Go—Please award: To Roseanne Barr, who was never that funny in the first place, and who set a kind of world record in taking her Andy-Warhol fifteen minutes of fame and using it to maximum disadvantage.

The Take the Money and Goy award: To Jackie Mason, a very funny guy—that's *guy* with a "u"—for struggling—what a *mensch*—to stay afloat in "Chicken Soup," a series that, the only reason you would watch it, is it had Mason, and so why—I'm asking you, why—did the *meshuggahs* at the network try to make it *Abie's Irish Rose* or—*feh*?—*Bridget and Bernie*? This man has not been served well by television.

The (probably) annual What the Hell Does Stephen Bochco Think He's Doing? award: To Stephen Bochco, who followed up "Hill Street Blues" and "L.A. Law" with "Doogie Howser, M.D."—dumb—and "Cop Rock"—really, truly, seriously dumb. This award actually is a kind of subaward to the one given David Lynch for screwing up "Twin Peaks," but since Bochco isn't as much a genius as Lynch, we—I—thought he deserved special mention.

The Good as Bochco at His Dazzling Best award: To "Law and Order," which regularly produces cop stories any detective



writer would kill to invent, which includes the best courtroom drama this side of "L.A. Law," and which really should be two hours, not one (this from my wife, Celeste—the only external meddling in this year's Murrays).

And, coincidentally, The John Williams of the Small Screen award: To Mike Post, who seems to have written the best theme music for every show from the haunting "Hill Street Blues" to "Quantum Leap" and beyond, by understanding that the small screen needs "small" themes—no Wagnerian freak-outs, but just a piano with string accompaniment, say, meditating on a few plangent chords: less is more, and more than enough.

The Maybe Lincoln Was Wrong award: To virtually everyone connected with reporting the Gulf Massacre, sheep led by hawks and fleecing their herds of viewers, fooling a helluva lot of the people for what seems to be a *helluva* long time.

And finally, The Diogenes award. On "The Best Hotel on Skid Row," an installment of HBO's sleaze-umentary "America Undercover" series, the crew is interviewing a junkie prostitute who can't get a job, wants out of The Life, and can't get into a methadone program. As she sits on the bed beside her boyfriend/roommate, an out-of-work juicer, talking about it all, she breaks down. And the guy turns to the camera and says, "Could you turn that thing off for a minute, please?" The camera obligingly shuts down—only, seconds later, to switch on, *literally* behind the guy's back, as he hugs and comforts the girl. It is the most truly and breathtakingly *moral* act I have seen in many a moon. If you don't think that little guy is going to get free booze in Heaven for that, and maybe hang out with the other little guy who halted the tanks in Tiananmen Square, then you pray to Somebody Else from me. (As for the cameraman, I figure...well never mind).

This is addictive, but there are space constraints. Those, anyway, are the Murrays for '90-91. As I said, I'd love to get submissions for next May's crop. The interesting thing about doing this, I'm surprised to say, is learning not just how central is the Tube to my (our?) perception of the "real world," but how much its frequent best and its frequent worst resonate with, tease, and encourage, our moral sense. FRANK McCONNELL

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A search for the 'unfettered self'

PAUL BAUMANN

Mary Gordon has views. Some are as shrewd as the arguments of a canon lawyer, some refreshingly pungent, and some merely sour. Her passionate attachments and her willingness to declare her allegiances are among the most attractive things about her writing. She's a welcome champion of Mary Cassatt and Ford Maddox Ford, a loyal acolyte of Virginia Woolf and Mary McCarthy, a sympathetic if distant advocate for those Catholics who battle "John Cardinal O'Connor and his kind." And as the tendentious title of this collection of essays suggests, Gordon is a staunch voice for the feminist grievance in both culture and politics.

Gordon's complicated relationship to Catholicism, so evident in her novels *Final Payments* and *The Company of Women*, seems to be an amalgam of aesthetic appreciation, abiding suspicion, and outrage. It's never less than personal. The essay, "'I Can't Stand Your Books,' A Writer Goes Home," makes that as clear as a papal condemnation. A familiar type of constipated Irish Catholic, whose sense of aggrieved solidarity is matched only by his or her sexual envy, seems to populate Gordon's family. "He always loved you very much," Gordon's aunt confided to her at the funeral of her favorite uncle. "But he thought your books were very dirty. He couldn't read them, you know." Most novelists would pay dearly for relatives like this.

In "More Catholic than the Pope," Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre and his merry band of bead counters and incense freaks come in for a well-deserved, if predictable, drubbing. Gordon concedes that Lefebvre's Society of St. Pius X may have the "charm of the impossible," the promise of an "agreeable fantasy." But, as so often with people this writer finds wanting, "they are frightened by change...they want to be told what to do." Gordon, who grew up in a working-class neighborhood on Long Island, tells us that but for the grace of God, or a good Barnard education, she too might have ended up mumbling Latin among these unreconstructed triumphalists. But you don't believe her. For one, she has better taste. She went to the Lefebvrists looking for Balmain's, she tells us, but found only Kresge's. It's all "fish sticks and Velveeta." Admittedly, Gordon has a sharp eye, but shooting ultra-ultramontanes in a fish barrel is more a carnival trick than a measure of marksmanship.

Book Discussed in this Essay

Good Boys and Dead Girls and Other Essays, *Mary Gordon, Viking, $19.95, 253 pp.*

Gordon's patronizing tone, her educated consumer's confidence, is just as evident in her efforts on behalf of the allegedly enlightened faction of the church. Irish-American Catholicism, with its insensibility to the arts and its comical anti-intellectualism, is perhaps a burden. (One wonders if most working-class Methodists or Baptists, or many others, had it much better.) Gordon's resentments can lead her to rather strained conclusions, however. "The people who are plumping for the reintroduction of Gregorian chant into the liturgy are also funding the *contras* in Nicaragua, and they're doing it for the same reason," she writes in "Getting Here from There: A Writer's Reflection on a Religious Past." That's an awful lot to attribute to plain chant. Church politics must appear more Manichean from a judicious distance. Gordon became "properly irreligious" at fourteen, she writes, relinquishing a pre-Vatican II childhood fascination with sainthood for the "world of literature and art." She believes in the vocation of the artist, although not in the religion of art. I'm not sure this distinction adds up to a difference, but certainly Gordon is right in judging art a paltry substitute for religion. Art is an unforgiving god.

So where does Gordon finally land on matters sacramental? One might meanly call it an intellectual suburb: she stays close enough to commute, but doesn't have to worry about staying over night or paying taxes. (Doubtless Gordon feels she paid enough spiritual taxes in childhood for a lifetime.) From the severe certainties of pre-Vatican II Catholicism, she has taken much aesthetic nourishment: a love of language, story, and beauty as well as a regard for mystery. She is as appalled as any *contra* supporter at the trivialities infecting the reformed liturgy ("on the whole a botched job"), and has fled many a Mass "for my own protection." But apparently Catholicism no longer engages her in any authoritative way. It is something "I make up each day, and it changes each day as I go along." There is considerable honesty in that admission. Each of us cuts our own private accommodation with the church. But Gordon's formulation probably crosses some negotiable but necessary boundary into arbitrariness; it sounds more like fiction than Catholicism.

Literature is where her heart lies. *Good Boys and Dead Girls* is largely about writers and the qualities and moralities of art. Her essays on Edith Wharton and J.F. Powers and a review of Mary McCarthy's *Cannibals and Missionaries* are masterly, combining balanced advocacy with acute analysis. "For McCarthy," observes Gordon, "terrorism

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is disturbing in the same way that sexual promiscuity would have been for Emily Brontë: it is political activity without manners, without form; therefore it is incapable of yielding much meaning and is inevitably without hope. In some crucial way, it is not serious: it has no stake in the future." Clear, penetrating, and sure-handed.

Her admiration for path-breaking women writers such as McCarthy and Virginia Woolf is intense. This occasionally leads to miscalculation. Despite Mary McCarthy's many impressive attributes, few have ever, as Gordon does in another piece, called her critical ministrations "tender." Gordon knows Woolf is an awful snob, but can't bring herself to hold Woolf accountable. Flannery O'Connor's failings are less subtle, and arouse Gordon's concern. To be sure, O'Connor is not an easy case; if her faith was certain, her art and temperament were quite enigmatic. This seems especially troublesome for someone as dedicated to liberal values and as self-consciously upwardly mobile as Gordon. O'Connor's stark parables, taste for violence, and conviction of judgment run counter to Gordon's more cosmopolitan moral tolerance and interest in manners and sensibility. O'Connor is peculiar, and her "circumscribed life," with its aggressive provincialism and terse, unapologetic Catholicism, poses problems for Gordon. O'Connor of course lived almost her entire adult life at home as an semi-invalid, dying of lupus seemingly without much complaint at thirty-nine. She was as brave as a saint, sexually chaste, yet unmistakably marked with the racial and social prejudices of her place and time. "What would she have written in Iowa or in Connecticut, living a freer life?" Gordon asks. It seems an odd, even an unimaginative question, like asking what Louis Armstrong might have become if he had been born white and grew up in West-chester. Besides, the causal connection between the kind of freedom Gordon prizes—"the exhausting effort of living fully and justly"—and the making of literature is dubious at best. Freedom from necessity is not always a prescription for creativity; indeed, necessity is often a spur.

This unresolved tension between social roots and opportunity, between faith and freedom, family and self, deep emotion and spontaneity, pervades these essays. Gordon's criticism is both moralistic and ideological. She wants to hold people to enlightened and universalistic standards yet allow room for the license and fierce discriminations of artistic vision. It is not a happy marriage. This is noticeably true in the schematic reading given American fiction in the title essay ("Good Boys and Dead Girls"), and especially in its extravagant deprecation of John Updike. The same ideological limitations lead her to savage Dennis Potter's ingenious TV movie, "The Singing Detective." In both cases, she objects so strongly to the surface sexual politics that she settles for wildly reductive interpretations.

There is nothing particularly new in Gordon's analysis of the misogynist undercurrents of American fiction. Much of the argument was developed, as she acknowledges, by Leslie Fiedler in *Love and Death in the American Novel*. American literature, at least as written by men, is the story of males who are in some sense terrified of domestic entanglement, even sexuality, and who turn to violence as compensation or out of frustration. As Fiedler wrote, American men flee women and the civilization they represent for the greater purity and sublimated sexuality only the company of other men can supply. When the going gets tough, the tough "light out for the territory," as Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn liked to do. Gordon calls this the "search for the unfettered self."

Gordon employs these useful if limited archetypes to expose the lethal effect on women of male domination and violence. Among others, she writes on Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* and Updike's Rabbit novels. But if her indictment is true, even scintillating, in its particulars, it seems almost willfully obtuse in its synthesis. A degree of unresolved rancor is betrayed in her conclusion, where she resorts to taunting Updike and others as pimply boys.

In large part, Gordon mistakes Updike's exploration, even obsession, with sexual themes and the social and existential realities they illuminate, for gynophobic excess. As far as Gordon is concerned, Updike is simply sacrificing the women in his novels on the altar of Rabbit Angstrom's dubious spiritual quest. "For Updike, women are messy; they are slow; and they get in a boy's way," she claims. Particularly galling is Updike's attempt to turn mere "physical characteristics" into spiritual qualities. Like a suspicious cleric, Gordon pedantically rejects Updike's attempt to touch upon religious motifs through sexual relations and description, judging them "overly transcendent and metaphorically unsatisfactory." (Imagine what Updike's aunt said to him at his uncle's funeral!) She further ignores how seriously Updike takes incarnational paradoxes, and how perverse his determinist Calvinism can be.

But she is right about the larger cultural forces reflected in the work of American male writers—temptations Updike accepts as givens, not ideals. "The story of America is the story of the escape from fate," Gordon writes. "The freedom and autonomy that America is meant to stand for is the attempt to define the self outside of the bruising authority of fate." American fictional heroes usually do try to flee women and the domestic fate they embody. The seemingly purer, less encumbered relationship with other males is held out as a possible salvation. "The maturing process is not one that deeply interests a certain kind of American writer," Gordon writes.

But she won't admit that Updike and others have an ironic and complicated awareness of these very problems. In discussing Thomas Hardy she suggests that the relationship between the sexes "may be a tragic one; perhaps we are doomed to want different and opposing things from life." Are even the most sophisticated American writers ignorant of this possi-

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bility? Apparently so. "But behavior is not the point for the American innocent," Gordon writes. "All that matters is that his heart must be pure, and he must move forward to the quest which for so many male American writers is the most crucial one: the search for the unfettered self."

Gordon is also right about the American —essentially the modern—longing for "the unfettered self." It is a pervasive intoxication, and one that often leads to carnage. Her writing on the natural, deeply satisfying bonds between mothers and children ("Having a Baby, Finishing a Novel") pays tribute to the primordial and humanizing value of the traditionally fettered self. "My subject as a writer has far more to do with family happiness than the music of the spheres," she writes. She praises Ford Maddox Ford for understanding "the work of domestic economy as utterly critical to happiness, indeed the very future, of the race." "My own prejudice," she confesses elsewhere, "is that to lose the identification with the small community is to lose irreplaceable riches." On a trip to Ellis Island she concludes that the custom-bound cultures of her immigrant ancestors introduced America to "fun...brought the good food, turned up the music, and taught everyone to dance."

These perspicacious sentiments, however, make her essays on abortion doubly curious. For when it comes to a woman's right "to choose," Gordon becomes as grim an apologist for the unfettered self as her worst caricature of the male American writer.

Gordon has endured tragedy in childbearing herself, and she is a strong, if nuanced, voice for the so-called traditional feminine sphere. Still, her feminism, her suspicion of masculine motives, and her sense of historical injustice push her to a dogmatic defense of abortion rights. This, I think, puts her in the position of defending the very forces of dehumanization she abhors in other contexts. "To compare abortion to murder is at best naive," she writes justly. "And yet there is no other human act to which it comes closer." But Gordon will not pursue the implications of this equation. More important, she

argues that "the decision for abortion can be made responsibly in the context of a morally lived life by a free and responsible moral agent." Possibly. Abortion is not a simple question, and Gordon's essays are a compelling examination of the inconsistencies in the anti-abortion position as well as a sobering reminder of how mixed the moral and legal status of abortion has been historically.

But few particulars about the "moral" context in which the decision for abortion takes place are forthcoming. "We must make decisions on abortion understanding how people really do live," she writes. But how we decide about abortion determines how a good many people actually live. "It will always be crucial to try to separate genuine moral concern from phobia, punitiveness, superstition, anxiety, a desperate search for certainty in an uncertain world." Well, that is unobjectionable enough. But acknowledging uncertainty and embracing it as an ethical premise are two different things, and lead to very different moral conclusions. Besides, where is the demand for certainty really located in this question? All the certainty lies, in fact, in the act of abortion. Uncertainty resides in the possibility of life and in our ambivalent, even antagonistic, relationship to that unwanted life. It is certainty that abortion promises, and complication that it removes.

We are, it seems, back to the dream of the unfettered self. What Gordon denounces as an appalling moral failure in American literature, she regards as a source of female emancipation in society. The counterattack against abortion rights has come "precisely [at] the time when women are achieving unprecedented levels of economic and political autonomy." A woman must "be confident that she need not pay [for] a failure of technology or judgment" if she is to have "a sexual life unriddled by fear." Ms. Rabbit wants the freedom to run as fast and as far as Mr. Rabbit. The Pill and legal abortion have given women the independence long supposedly enjoyed by men. Most significantly, as Gordon sees it, equality and the demands of self-fulfillment require that men and women bear the same consequences for the same sexual acts. Legal abortion ensures that equality of consequences.

Who, it might be asked, is running away from nature here? Who is insisting on the primacy of the self? Who escaping fate? Somehow the sexual irresponsiblity of men—indeed men's biological immunity from childbearing—has become the basis for a woman's unqualified power over the unborn. In a sense, sexual differentiation itself is judged an historical and ontological anomaly. Unrestricted abortion, Gordon suggests, is an effort to equalize risks, to rationalize the outcomes of sexual life, and to use technology to ameliorate the inherent evils of sexual difference.

But 1.5 million abortions a year is a strange manifestation of equality, individual liberty, or sexual realism. Abortion on this scale should discomfort someone with Gordon's professed abhorrence of "abstraction," for it is a chilling extension of the modern world's belief in rational mastery and social engineering. It is the most insidious expression of modernity's delegitimization of all inherited affinities and values—such as those between a woman and her unborn child. Following the example of the marketplace, we are now intent on eliminating all chance and accident from our private lives. In this context, abortion is implicitly an attack on all human particularity and diversity, for it proclaims that all moral authority must bend to one standard—that of interchangeability, or what is erroneously called "equality." If we are interchangeable—as we are in the market-

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place—we are replaceable. Is this how we should think of new life? Where have Gordon's "irreplaceable riches" gone?

In fact, the sexual relationship between men and women is asymmetrical. Until human reproduction becomes a factory operation, women will carry a disproportionate burden—and should be accorded a disproportionate regard. True, abortion levels the field. But at what cost? Gordon rightly senses that a human life of real variety and emotional depth requires organic connection, particular attachments, and perhaps even parochial authorities. None of these traditional social ties are based on equality in the strict sense of the term, however. How does unrestricted abortion, with its hyperindividualized and overly rationalized morality, fit into Gordon's more humanitarian vision?

It is a cliché to say that a childish fear of change is at the heart of our present dissatisfactions and insecurity. Our legitimate fears, our feelings of artificiality and loss, reflect a world where the most fundamental human relations are being relativized by an idealized rationality. Human dignity, emotional depth and authenticity, however, inhere in what is given, what is unearned, what is passed on—like the care one bestows, literally without reason, upon children. And the love received in return. The rationalizing impulse tells us we can lethally intervene in the creation of human life—minimizing uncertainty and ambivalence—and still preserve a belief in the sanctity of life. True, reason and technology enable us to manipulate nature to much benefit. But whatever the future holds, ultimately we cannot escape the chains—and one is sex—that fasten us to nature as well. Escaping the mystery and limits of that condition is what abortion too often promises. It is another method of stamping out ambiguity, and should make any novelist as good as Mary Gordon suspicious.

BOOKS

Blessed are the coalition makers

WHY AMERICANS HATE POLITICS
E.J. Dionne, Jr.
Simon & Schuster, $22.95, 430 pp.

Wilson Carey McWilliams

E. J. Dionne, now of the *Washington Post* and formerly of the *New York Times*, is what a political reporter ought to be, a relentless seeker of that kernel of meaning that is the heart of fact. He has an old-time journalist's ear for humbug, and he knows the importance of interests and power in political life; but Dionne also recognizes that at bottom, politics is speech, a quarrel, more or less civil, about the just and the unjust. And he argues that contemporary Americans hate politics because they are disgusted by the terms of debate, an "artificial polarization" defined by the contest between liberals and conservatives.

Both ideologies, Dionne indicates, contain a contradiction. Conservatism defends the free market and the autonomy of the private sector, but it upholds a whole set of "traditional values" that stand in need of public support, not the least against the corrosive effect of the market itself. Liberalism, willing to support energetic government, especially in economic life, hesitates to use government to promote civic virtues, and in fact is so fearful of seeming repressive that it appears to have no standard of the public good beyond the desire to conciliate conflicting groups, a kind of appeasement rather than an ideal of justice.

The upshot is that liberalism and conservatism, in their different ways, are engrossed with the defense of their favorite individual and group "rights," seeking to exclude politics from large areas of life, so that we "hate" politics, in part, because so often it is unable to solve, or even address, the things that matter.

Of course, ideological incoherence is not always a disadvantage in American politics. James Madison's familiar argument instructs us that in a large republic, majorities must always be coalitions, full of implicit tensions and patched together by compromise, unable to take a consistently high moral tone or, ordinarily, to last very long. But even on these terms, a majority needs some unifying principle or antipathy. Something has to seem important enough to justify setting aside other differences in the interest of victory, a principle that contemporary conservatives have applied much more successfully than their liberal rivals, and that is the greater part of Dionne's story.

This fine account of the development of present-day conservatism shows that political coalitions are like geological formations, built up stratum by stratum out of the sediment of advocacy and events. In the beginning, however, were shared aversions. Aiming to harmonize the right, the "fusionism" of the *National Review* focused on the negative commonalities uniting free marketeers and traditionalists like Russell Kirk: anticommunism and the agreement that capitalism is preferable to the "creeping socialism" of the welfare state. The great increase in conservatism's strength, however, grew out of the turbulence and failed promises of the 1960s and '70s, which cast a shadow on the moral title of the state.

Dionne does justice to the New Left's crazy-quilt of radical democrats and countercultural individualists, but he points out that the theme and legacy of that complex movement was suspicion of institutions and of authority. The same years, moreover,

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inspired neoconservatism's doubts about the efficacy of state planning and its conviction that the bureaucratic "New Class" was undermining the civil and social decencies—a view shared, on the basis of rather different reasoning, by the religious right. Although both groups had at least a nodding respect for the magisterial authority of government, they made it their first goal to stop what they took to be liberalism's damaging interventions, making "at least, do no harm" a first principle of social policy. All these intellectual currents were reinforced by resentments at the slowing of economic growth, the inflation-prodded rise of taxation, and the failed opportunity of Jimmy Carter's presidency.

Conservatism won with Ronald Reagan because it assembled a majority which, in radically diverse ways, agreed in its dissatisfaction with the liberal version of the welfare state. That, as Dionne suggests, is why the broad programmatic failure of the Reagan revolution has been essential to its continued political success: without the existence of the liberal state, the conservative coalition would lose its *raison d'être*.

In fact, Dionne holds, the conservative movement is now exhausted. The transformation of the erstwhile Soviet empire has already softened the old anticommunist glue and revived conservative isolationism. Similarly, he argues, it is now clear that, like Ronald Reagan, George Bush supports "traditional values" in only symbolic ways; there has been no serious dent in crime; free market policies have reinforced self-seeking and may have speeded the disintegration of society. For Dionne, the real lesson of the Republican victory in 1988—like that of the GOP's defeat in 1976—is that conservatives can win only when they can run against liberalism's weakened past (or when, as in the Iraq crisis, liberals themselves insist on reminding us).

Dionne argues that the Democrats need their own version of "fusionism," a coalition of liberals and "populists," still committed to state regulation of the economy, but adopting some of populism's concern for family, community, and civic obligation. The book offers many suggestions for such a program: politics aiming at full employment at socially adequate wages for all Americans (and with them, following William Julius Wilson, a de-emphasis on affirmative action); a family policy that—upholding the equality of the sexes in the workplace and the home—regards the two-parent family as the standard for policy; a tougher stance on law enforcement, and a recognition that "neighborhood" is not simply a code word for racism; support for a positive American role in foreign affairs, and so on.

It is a sensible program, but one that asks liberals to moderate or shelve a number of cherished doctines, and before they are ready to do so, liberals may need another, more terrible dose of defeat. At best, it will take superb rhetoric to construct Dionne's preferred coalition, the analog of Reagan's beguiling appeal to libertarians and cultural moralists. (The failure of John Silber's abrasive version last year in Massachusetts is instructive.)

Moreover, even if the right is as "exhausted" as Dionne believes, it draws strength from the structural, longer-term reasons that, beyond his argument, contribute to the public's growing distaste for politics. Modern politics, baffling and full of technicalities, is bound to make us feel stupid. It also calls attention to our vulnerability and lack of power, especially since, as Dionne notes, our more fragmented society means that we are more isolated and more likely to be addressed in essentially private terms. The resulting tendency toward a fearful, self-protective privatism works against any positive use of public authority and runs parallel to conservatism's mainstream. All the disturbing qualities of modern politics, however, strengthen Dionne's case: If speech and argument are our best—or only—hope for a revitalized civic life, there is every reason to seek words strong enough to challenge the dominations and powers of the time.

NORTHERN BOUND

THE PROMISED LAND
The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America
Nicholas Lemann
Knopf, $24.95, 416 pp.

Don Wycliff

Since the time of Abraham, migration has been an avenue to progress for those restless spirits who value the opportunity to advance over the comfort of familiar surroundings. So it was for the Europeans who, over many decades, came in waves to American shores. So it was at first for the African-Americans who, during the middle decades of this century, streamed out of the rural South with its racial oppression to the urban North and its relative freedom. So it was at first—and then something happened.

Five million blacks joined the northward trek between 1940 and 1970, making theirs the biggest migration in world history. No place in the South contributed more eager participants than the Mississippi Delta, that vast, richly fertile area where cotton truly was king. No northern destination was more eagerly sought than Chicago, "City of the Big Shoulders." No two places illustrate more vividly how the black migration changed America, North and South, for better and for worse.

It was Nicholas Lemann's great inspiration that the best way to tell the story of this black migration would be by focusing on those two places and on a representative few actual migrants. He pursued that inspiration brilliantly, and the result is a powerful, absorbing book, so well-researched and well-written that it reads at times like a good novel.

The Promised Land is not a perfect book—what book is? Lemann is at his best when he is describing—life in the South under segregation and the sharecropping regime; the machinations of Chicago politicians like Richard J. Daley or William (Big Bill) Dawson; the building of the Chicago ghetto; the intriguing confluence of inter-

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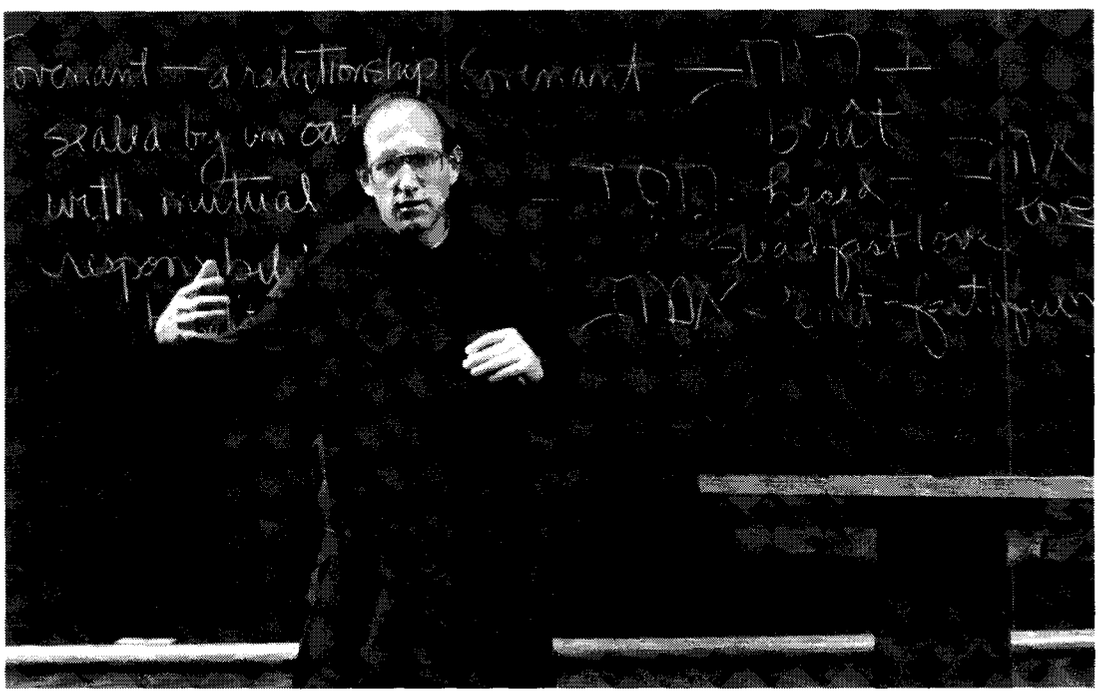

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ests that made Daniel Patrick Moynihan the favorite social theorist of President Richard Nixon.

Lemann is at his weakest when he is prescribing solutions to the dilemma of the urban underclass. It's not that what he proposes is foolish or off-base. His ideas are pretty much the standard litany of unreconstructed poverty warriors. Rather, it's that there is a wistful, vaguely naive quality in the way he addresses the issue.

For example, he writes in the afterword that "if we can heal the ghettos, which are the part of the country most hurt by our current fragmentation, it will be a sign that we are on the way to a restoration of our spirit of community."

No doubt it will be—or would be. The only problem is that a vital spirit of community, a sense of a social contract that obligates each of us as our brother's keeper, would seem a prerequisite for healing the ghettos. But no one—not even that great Democratic hope Mario Cuomo—seems to have any idea how to restore a sense of community to the nation.

At another point, near the end of the chapter on how Washington responded in the 1960s and 1970s to the crisis in the ghettos, Lemann complains that, contrary to the claims of conservative critics of the war on poverty, "we hadn't tried everything" to cure persistent urban, i.e., black, poverty. "All the federal efforts in the ghettos took place during a uniquely difficult time for liberal initiatives aimed at racial problems," he says. But if the Kennedy/Johnson/Nixon years were "uniquely difficult," it would be interesting to learn what time and what political conditions Lemann would consider more propitious.

Fortunately, such clangorously false notes are few. For the most part, *The Promised Land* is good, solid history.

It begins, appropriately, in the Delta, with a discourse on the invention and introduction into wide use of the mechanical cotton picker in the 1940s. As far as the segregated black serfs of the South were concerned, this device had the opposite effect of Eli Whitney's cotton gin a century earlier. The gin made black labor valuable in the cultivation and harvesting of cotton; the mechanical picker, each copy of which could do the work of fifty people, made it superfluous.

It also forced the Southern white elites to turn on a dime. Where previously they had had to compete with Northern labor recruiters to retain black labor, they suddenly had to be concerned with getting rid of blacks who, without employment, would be a threat to social peace in the region.

Fortunately there was the industrial North. To most Delta blacks, including those from Clarksdale, Mississippi, the North mostly meant Chicago. Relatives and friends who had gone there would return periodically sporting new cars, new clothes, and stories of abundant jobs paying unheard of sums.

Uless Carter, one of the migrants whose story Lemann tells, found that it was all true. He made the trip north in 1942; he was twenty-five years old and he went just to visit a sister. But within an hour of arriving at his sister's kitchenette apartment in a South Side building, Uless's plans changed.

"One of the women in the building told him her boyfriend had a good job in a restaurant that was looking for more help," Lemann writes. "She called her boyfriend over and made him phone the restaurant right then and there; the man handed the phone over to Uless, who found himself being offered a job as a dishwasher by the owner.... Now the owner...was telling him he could come to work on Monday morning and make $25 a week. His job in Clarksdale paid less than a quarter of that.... Without hesitation he told the owner he would be there Monday, and now he was a resident of Chicago instead of a visitor."

Not every migrant's story was as happy as Uless Carter's. Many migrants, in Lemann's view, exemplified the old saying that "You can take the boy (or man or woman) out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the boy." His thesis is that the modern underclass was present incipiently even in the earliest days of the black migration, because the underclass culture of poverty is essentially the same as the sharecropper culture of the South.

Interestingly, none of Lemann's subjects seems to exemplify that. Even the most star-crossed, a woman named Ruby Lee Daniels, seemed to possess a certain innate ambition, even though she frequently was awash in a sea of troubles. Her children, raised in the North, were another matter, however.

It was through Robert Kennedy's interest in the problem of juvenile delinquency that his brother's administration became involved in the problems of the ghettos, the worlds the migrants made in America's segregated cities. But even at its best and most active, the Kennedy administration devoted only minimal time and attention to the ghettos.

The real federal energy and commitment came with Lyndon Johnson, a Southerner who never did eliminate the term "nigger" from his lexicon but who, partly out of guilt and partly because of his personal philosophy of government, felt racial justice must be one of his highest priorities.

Johnson's program was undone not solely by the diversion of money and mental energy to the war in Vietnam, but also,

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Lemann says, by a critical policy mistake. Johnson embraced "community action," an idea cooked up by the Kennedy team, as the central precept of the war on poverty. Not only did community action not work; it probably was unworkable. And it ran the poverty program afoul of powerful and politically important local leaders like Chicago's Mayor Daley.

Certainly one of the most interesting parts of Lemann's book is the discussion of the Nixon-Moynihan relationship and its effect on the course of the nation's social policy. Nixon, Lemann says, believed blacks were inherently inferior to whites, but nevertheless made some important contributions to ameliorating the situation of those in the ghettos. Moynihan, suspicious of certain pernicious tendencies in the nation's liberal elites, nevertheless nudged Nixon steadily in a liberal direction on social policy.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Lemann's book is that he follows his migrant subjects to the end. Two of them, Ruby Lee Daniels (now Ruby Haynes) and Uless Carter, eventually moved back south to Clarksdale. They live in a subsidized housing development operated by a black man who got his start in the federal poverty program. Another lives the life of a member of Chicago's substantial black middle class on the South Side.

America, which was so radically changed by the black migration, can neither return to the way it was nor settle into comfortable middle-classness. Among its many pressing problems is an underclass about which something must be done. Just possibly, Nicholas Lemann's fine book may help us discover what that something ought to be.

NAIPAUL LOOKS AGAIN

INDIA
A Million Mutinies Now
V.S. Naipaul
Viking, $24.95, 520 pp.

Jo McGowan

When my husband (who is from India) and I were courting and I was trying to learn all I could about his country, he told me not to bother with V.S. Naipaul. Few things irritated him as much as Indians who sat in England or America enjoying its luxuries while criticizing India for its shortcomings. Naipaul, not even born in India but in Trinidad, and whose two earlier books on his ancestral land (*An Area of Darkness* and *India: A Wounded Civilization*) were fiercely critical of the country's rigid, caste-based politics, along with its filth, squalor, and poverty, was doubly offensive.

We were, in fact, sitting in America (enjoying the odd luxury) when he told me this. After we had been in India about a year he said he hated to admit it, but Naipaul might have been right.

As with most visitors to postindependence India, Naipaul's attention was captured entirely by the difficulties of life there. They were so all encompassing it was nearly impossible to see anything else. And, like my husband, I can certainly understand. Even with the best will in the world, it's hard not to have strongly negative reactions to the sadness India seems to specialize in.

Getting beyond the sadness requires a hardening which can also be painful. For liberals, moral outrage is often more comfortable than intellectual stimulation and simple curiosity. For humanitarians, India is a problem. To treat it as an interesting, lively place, sparkling with debate, controversy, and brilliant ideas seems elitist and paradoxical.

But, in fact, to do anything less is to miss the magic and delight of the country. And in *India: A Million Mutinies Now*, Naipaul at last attempts to give India its due. From the cacophony of voices that assailed him in the past, he is now able to identify separate individuals. The faceless, swarming masses which alarmed him so on previous trips have been reduced to manageably small groups.

It is through the particular and the specific that Naipaul now wishes to view India. Independence brought about a "liberation of spirit...that could not come as release alone....It had to come as disturbance, as rage and revolt. India was now a country of a million little mutinies."

In fact, some of the million mutinies are far from little. Three states are in the midst of civil war as increasingly violent secessionists press for their demands. (In Punjab alone there were over four thousand politically motivated killings last year.) Many of the revolts are the result of a heightened consciousness—the women's movement, the organizing of untouchables, the rationalists—and while their presence makes life even more chaotic and unpredictable, they are, to Naipaul, the surest sign of growth, restoration.

Naipaul has traveled exhaustively throughout India, conducting in-depth interviews, generally through interpreters. Some of the stories are fascinating. My favorite is the account of the Dravidian Progressive Movement, a political party in Tamil Nadu whose history is far more compelling than I had realized just having read newspaper accounts of its activities. Periyar, its "prophet," as he is referred to, was a contemporary of Gandhi and outlived him by many years. He was a fierce atheist and a dedicated political worker. He was the anti-Gandhi; in his personal life and in his political program, he was his absolute opposite. Although Periyar is practically worshiped today in many parts of Tamil Nadu, he is all but unknown in the rest of India.

The book is full of such information. We meet Namdeo Dhasal, the founder of the Dalit Panthers, a militant organization of "untouchables," formed on the lines of the Black Panthers. The man is also a poet of some note, and Naipaul provides an interesting aside on the differences between literary and street Marathi. We meet an aging astrologer, a struggling film writer, the editor of a popular women's magazine, and a host of others, all with their own complicated stories.

It is, however, the stories which are the

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book's main flaw. Most Indians love to tell stories. They seem to believe that one cannot understand them without knowing their entire history, their relationships with obscure aunts and uncles, and where they fit in a larger picture. Mr. Naipaul is the perfect recipient for such information. He gathers it all in lovingly, caressing each minute detail, and presenting it *all*, verbatim, it would seem.

The book is 520 pages long and, with good editing, could easily have been cut in half. We get page after page of one person talking—"Get to the point," I kept muttering. But Naipaul seems content to listen, tape-recorder switched on, mind turned off. Many (not all) of the people he interviews are indeed interesting, but even interesting lives need to be selectively presented. And when he is not encouraging lengthy, rambling monologues, we are often treated to lengthy, seemingly irrelevant descriptive writing. Indeed, describing the speeches of a political leader, Naipaul could be writing about himself: "...words seemed to have been loved for their own sake, and...speeches, in order to be relished, had to be spun out, conceit upon conceit."

Naipaul writes for the *New Yorker*, a magazine not noted for its conciseness. Reading this book is not unlike flipping through the pages of one of its endless articles on, say, electromagnetic fields, and wondering how on earth anyone can find so much to say on the subject, only to discover at the end that it is Part 1 of a three-part article. Naipaul is a fine writer with a wonderful subject. Still, he could use a more diligent editor. ❑

HERE'S MUD IN YOUR EYE

THE CONSCIENCE OF THE EYE
The Design and Social Life of Cities
Richard Sennett
Knopf, $24.95, 252 pp.

Christopher Lasch

Trained as a sociologist, Richard Sennett began his career, more than twenty years ago, with solid, rather conventional studies of class structure, social mobility, and urban neighborhoods. His work has become increasingly abstract and speculative over the years. His latest study of the city, written under the influence of literary postmodernism, is irritatingly diffuse, vague, and esoteric—almost ethereal in its complete disregard of commerce and industry, poverty and crime, politics and government, or any of the other concrete, material forces that shape city life.

As in his earlier work, Sennett explores the disjunction between the private and public worlds—the deplorable retreat, as he sees it, from the city's confusion, diversity, and excitement. He still regards "privatization" as the central theme of urban history, but he no longer cares to explore the political economy of cities or the ways in which it would have to change if cities were to become more convivial. This subject is closed, as far as Sennett is concerned. "I will not pursue it," he announces without explanation.

It is typical of his method that instead of discussing the phenomenon of "white lightning"—fires deliberately set by landlords who find it more profitable to collect insurance than rents—he describes a film about white lightning. With misplaced concreteness, he tells us that the movie was screened at a "film-editing studio near Orso's Italian Restaurant on Forty-sixth Street," that the room was "filled with perhaps forty people, many of them from the documentary film world," and that he himself helped to write the script. These details, the significance of which is by no means self-evident, push the crisis of urban real estate speculation into the background; perhaps they are meant to assure us that even though New York is falling apart, there will always be someone on hand to film its collapse. The director, Sennett notes in passing, "had the grace to photograph a Japanese film crew also making a documentary." When there is nothing left of New York to photograph, we can be sure that filmmakers will still make a point of taking pictures—graciously—of each other.

Sennett's concluding commentary on this documentary offers a fair sample of his prose: "It arouses empathic concern from its very powers to disorient and to deny us our catharsis. This is the urban conscience of the eye."

A book that resorts so often to this kind of language, rejects "linear narrative," and ranges all over the map without regard to chronological order is not very easy to summarize or even to read. Still, we can piece together an argument of sorts. The movement toward privatization, according to Sennett, started with Christianity, which erected a "wall between inner and outer life." Christianity set the Western world on a "disastrous course in which the spiritual has become discontinuous with the physical." In the nineteenth century, a secularized version of Christianity led middle-class people to seek a "secular sanctuary" in the privacy of their families. Their "worship of the domestic" made them indifferent, like their Christian predecessors, to the need for cities that were architecturally "stimulating." Instead they surrounded themselves with "bland, neutralizing spaces."

The Enlightenment sought an "antidote to inward-turning subjectivity" in a kind of transparency, Sennett argues—an "open window" between the self and its surroundings. In the twentieth century, the principles of the Enlightenment found architectural expression in glass houses and glass skyscrapers; but these buildings, intended to reveal the inner and outer worlds to each other, actually made them mutually remote and inaccessible. The ability to see what cannot be touched or heard creates a sense of unreality. "The world made visible through this window has been devalued in its reality."

Renaissance designers like Sixtus V, who rebuilt much of Rome in the sixteenth century, had a better idea—the use of perspective to challenge viewers and disrupt their visual expectations. Here Sennett's

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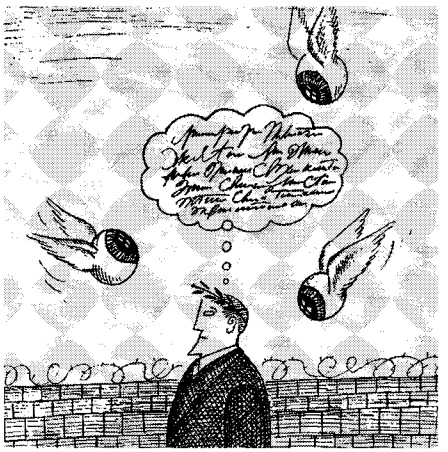

writing becomes more abstract than ever. Perspective, he says, contained an unfortunate "undertone of possessive domination," but it had the "power to engage men and women beyond their perceptual control." He quotes from the art historian Svetlana Alpers, who distinguishes between two modes of perception. In the first, "I see the world"; in the second, a passive mode preferred by Alpers and Sennett, "the world is being seen." Having joined the literary postmodernists (with a few lingering reservations), Sennett applauds the "disappearance of the subject." Postmodernism, he says, delivers us from the "prison of subjectivity," breaking down the walls constructed by Christianity and the nineteenth-century cult of domesticity.

If none of this is terribly clear, it does not get any clearer in Sennett's exposition of James Baldwin's essay "The Fire Next Time." Sennett holds up this essay as an example of the "principle of disrupted linear sequence." It is probably pointless to try to explicate such phrases or to extract some kind of clarity from them, since Sennett has already condemned clarity, in effect, as one of those misguided ideals of the Enlightenment that postmodern men and women can do without. Nor will I try to explain how the "nonlinear experience of difference" is built into the design—or lack of design—of an urban thoroughfare like Fourteenth Street, one of Sennett's favorite parts of New York. "These may seem abstract questions," he writes, "but there is something to be learned" from pondering them. Most readers will probably remain unconvinced.

Sennett has a great deal to say about "narrative space." He assures us, once again, that this is a "far less abstract idea" than it seems, but his words do not carry much conviction. Again and again, the reader is rebuffed with phrases of unyielding opacity. A certain playground, we are told, is a "space where time can begin." The best design is one that creates a "restless, problematic space." Good design encourages "uncertainty, displacement, and the loss of control." It promotes "experiences of radical disorientation." Thus Fourteenth Street "is what Baldwin's story looks like."

In his younger days, Sennett was influenced, among others, by the psychoanalyst Erik Erikson, and something of Erikson survives in Sennett's dictum that the "capacity for more complex experience" marks the passage from youth to maturity. City life at its best, he thinks, promotes the "experience of otherness, of disruptive difference." It is "provocative, arousing." These words appear over and over again in Sennett's text. His fascination with "arousal" unavoidably conveys the impression of a jaded sensibility for which "difference" serves more as a cure for boredom than a challenge to our cultural prejudices and a stimulus to moral growth. The imprisoned self, which is to be rescued by encounters with the "other," turns out to be a detached, formless, free-floating self—a self without prejudices, without any background at all, without a point of view of its own that is put at risk by exposure to others.

Sennett condemns the "fear of exposure" allegedly built into our cities. He calls for more exposure to "experience" but refers merely to the capacity to register a variety of scenes—the capacity for aesthetic appreciation. His model urbanite is the *flaneur*, the dandy, the connoisseur of impressions. He speaks of the "moral value of exposure to others," but it is only the aesthetic value of "exposure" that interests him. Aestheticism, of course, is the hallmark of the postmodernist outlook, notwithstanding its claim to speak about politics and morality.

Throughout his career, Sennett has attacked the family as a bastion of "privatization." His first book, *Families*

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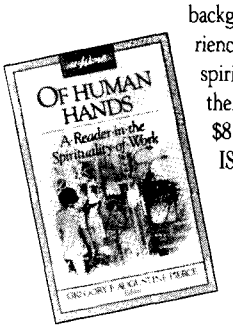

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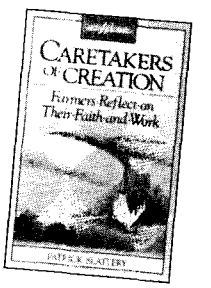

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Against the City, announced the direction of his work in 1970. The title conveys the one-dimensional character of Sennett's thinking. He has never been able to grasp the way in which families work for the city as well as against it. Unless people start life with a culture of their own, exposure to other cultures will seldom enhance their moral or even their aesthetic awareness. Without home culture, as it used to be called—a background of firmly held standards and beliefs—people will encounter the "other" merely as consumers of impressions and sensations, as cultural shoppers in pursuit of the latest novelties. It is important for people to measure their own values against others and to run the risk of changing their minds; but exposure to others will do them very little good if they have no minds to risk. New perspectives presuppose a pre-existing point of view. The "death of the subject" makes us more receptive to a variety of impressions, but it also means that impressions will make little difference in our lives, except to strengthen the feeling that nothing really matters.

Is that the point Sennett wants to leave us with, that nothing matters? Probably not; but he would be hard pressed to refute it, without revising most of his assumptions about society, cities, and selfhood.

IMPERFECT MODEL

AMERICAN STEEL
Hot Metal Men and the Resurrection of the Rust Belt
Richard Preston
Prentice Hall, $19.95, 278 pp.

David Bensman

Richard Preston's *American Steel: Hot Metal Men and the Resurrection of the Rust Belt* is a brilliant but deeply flawed account of the start-up of a Nucor Corporation mini-mill in Crawfordsville, Indiana. The story is of extraordinary interest because Nucor is a success story whose entrepreneurial verve makes the Big Steelmakers look like bunglers whose failures have jeopardized the nation's international competitiveness. And Crawfords-ville is the most notable of Nucor's successes: the new plant incorporates a revolutionary technology, developed in West Germany, that allows a relatively inexpensive mini-mill to produce thin slabs of steel that can be rolled into the sheets that make up American cars, refrigerators, railroad cars, and washing machines.

Preston's account allows the reader to see the dramatic opening of a steel mill through the eyes of the men and women who planned, built, and operated it. It is a story of fully fleshed out men and women engaged in path-breaking work. Preston takes us to the "vomit colored" building housing Nucor's spartan corporate headquarters in Charlotte, North Carolina, where its president, Ken Iverson, orchestrates a $1.3-billion company with the aid of twenty support staff and an Ayn Randish managerial philosophy: decentralize! make mistakes! take risks!

Preston is the best of many writers who have celebrated Nucor's entrepreneurial success. In countless articles in the business press, Nucor is presented as a model for American business, living proof of the wonders that can be accomplished when the bureaucratic management structures and restrictive union work rules that cripple our nation's industrial plants are removed. Three factors are usually cited as responsible for Nucor's success. The first is the company's investment in technology. Throughout the 1980s, Nucor's willingness to try out new production methods enabled it to move from the low end of the steel market (bolts and bars), where profit margins are lowest, to the midlevel small structural beam market, and finally to large structural beams and sheet steel. Nucor's willingness to try out new processes has enabled it not only to earn consistently high profits, but to challenge Big Steel on its home turf, the product markets where the large integrated companies earn the bulk of their profits.

Second, Nucor's decentralized management structure is favorably contrasted to the bureaucratic Big Steel companies. Nucor employs just five layers of management, as opposed to ten or eleven at Big Steel; its top management allows plant managers to run their operations as if they were separate businesses.

Finally, Nucor depends on a bonus and profit-sharing system to motivate workers and managers to do their best, indeed, to do better than anyone ever dreamed they could do. Nucor production workers are grouped into teams of twenty-five to thirty, and they earn bonuses that can double (or triple) their base pay every week for exceeding standard output. They also receive stock sharing, in lieu of a retirement plan. Managers also enjoy a pay-for-performance system that can hold down their earnings to relatively low levels if things go wrong, but can make them rich if things go well. Without question, the Nucor pay plan is generous and extreme in the way it ties compensation to output. Average annual earnings of production workers exceed $40,000, significantly above the union wage in Big Steel; and many Nucor managers have become millionaires. On the other hand, in Nucor's worst year, 1982, Ken Iverson's earnings were just $110,000, last on the list of Fortune 500 chief executive officers; and Nucor employees' retirements could be impoverished if Nucor's stock were to drop significantly.

Unfortunately, deficiencies in Preston's method cause him to paint a distorted picture of what is far from a model for American business. The problem stems from Preston's decision to tell Nucor's story directly from the mouths of company personnel; in many cases, the author paraphrases his characters, practically removing himself from the narrative. Preston's decision places us quickly inside the characters' souls, but we learn little more than what his characters see and feel. Preston provides only the slightest of contexts for his dramatic story; we learn a paltry amount about the dynamics of the world steel industry, about Nucor's competitors, about government policies affecting steel, about the state

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and local government subsidies offered Nucor to induce its investment in rural areas. Among the important elements of the Nucor story that Preston all but ignores are the fact that almost all American steel companies became profitable after the fall of the U.S. dollar in 1985; that almost all American steel companies made tremendous productivity gains since 1982; that the United Steelworkers of America, the union that Preston disparages repeatedly throughout the text, worked diligently with the steelmakers to boost productivity and reduce labor costs over the last decade.

Preston's refusal to investigate the context of his story is especially evident in his slipshod treatment of Nucor's safety record. Throughout Preston's narrative, he provides incidental details of Nucor's irresponsible approach to workplace safety. The problem starts at the top, with Keith Busse, a plant manager who leads Preston on a hair-raising chase through small towns and rural country lanes at ninety miles per hour in his pearl-colored Audi sedan with smoked windows. The problem extends to front-line supervisors who have never done their job before, and have no understanding of the dangers inherent in steelmaking. It includes construction workers too macho to use their safety equipment. (Preston reports the death of two ironhangers, who, under Nucor supervision, fell to their deaths because they had not bothered to use their safety straps.)

The company's indifference to safety is pervasive. In one of the book's most bloodcurdling chapters, Preston describes how one worker is burned to death by molten steel when a crane slips its cables and drops a ladle onto the floor of the casting room. (The crane had not been maintained and inspected in compliance with federal safety standards.) Such carnage calls into question Nucor's status as a model for American industry. If Nucor's productivity gains come at the expense of workplace safety, who would advocate that other companies join Nucor in turning back the clock on eighty years of progress? Joseph Kinney, director of the National Safe Workplace Institute, whom Preston cites and slights, believes that "Nucor's bonus systems and the absence of work rules encourage both managers and workers to take chances with safety in order to increase production." Apparently, Preston agrees with Kinney. In the *New Yorker*'s second installment of an abridged version of *American Steel* (March 4, 1991), Preston writes: "Nucor, having thrown work rules out of the window, has developed an uncanny ability to motivate its line workers to play hard and fast in the start-up and operation of a plant—that is, to take business risks, operational risks, and even personal risks, in their efforts to raise production. For some workers, the risks are fatal."

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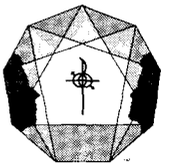
But in the book-length version of *American Steel*, Preston mysteriously dismisses Kinney's concerns about Nucor's fatality record (nine to twelve deaths over eleven years, depending on which fatalities one attributes to Nucor, and which to its venders and directly supervised contractors). In lieu of his *New Yorker* conclusion that Nucor's incentive pay system encourages unsafe practices, in his book Preston parrots company rationalizations. One must wonder why *American Steel* reaches such cavalier conclusions about the safety issue. Moreover, why does Preston's book not incorporate the research on which the modified, sober conclusions of his *New Yorker* article are based? (When I asked Preston's editor at Prentice-Hall about the discrepancies between the book and the articles, he professed ignorance about workplace safety and "stood by" Preston's research abilities.)

From the evidence presented in *American Steel*, Nucor is far from the model corporation Preston and so many other business writers have claimed. It does not train its employees and managers adequately; it does not plan carefully; its incentive pay system reinforces the company's culture of indifference to workplace safety. On the other hand, Nucor surely has pioneered in technological risk-taking and productivity enhancement. Such a situation calls for a more complex, comprehensive assessment. To be sure, Preston's tale is a tour-de-force. It should, however, carry a label: Warning: The Story You Are About to Read May be Injurious to Workers' Health.



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THE UNIVERSE AS SAGGING MATTRESS

LONELY HEARTS OF THE COSMOS
Dennis Overbye
HarperCollins, $25, 430 pp.

Nancy M. Haegel

The title conjures up a romantic novel, but the romance is philosophical in Dennis Overbye's *Lonely Hearts of the Cosmos*, a nonfiction survey of cosmology, the search for the origin and destiny of the universe. Men and women have always pondered such questions, but only during the past seventy years, since Einstein's theory of relativity, have astronomers and physicists had a framework within which to pursue the answers. Overbye, a science writer who studied physics at MIT, surveys recent progress on the key questions of cosmology: How old is the universe? Will it expand forever or collapse on itself? How did stars and galaxies come to exist from an amazingly uniform initial condition? How close to the original "creation event," the big bang, can we approach through the history written in the heavens?

Answers to some of these questions are contained in the Hubble constant, the ratio between the redshift of a galaxy (a measure of the rate at which it is moving away from the observer) and its distance. Named for its discoverer, the Hubble constant becomes "the most amazing scientific discovery of all time ... the cipher that would haunt him (Hubble) and Sandage and future generations of cosmologists and drive them to the sky clawing for patterns in the darkness between the galaxies, seeking the signatures of particles, forces, dimensions, and energies only a heartbeat from eternity, demanding from the black crumpled night some explanation of the origin and fate of time itself." It is a dramatic story, and Overbye tells it in dramatic prose.

Allan Sandage is Hubble's successor, and Overbye traces Sandage's career to show the interplay of ability and personality that fuels scientific progress. Sandage is a gifted man, taking on a large task. "Hubble died too young and left me with a burden, an incredible burden. It would be as if you were appointed to be copy editor to Dante...and then Dante died...." One feels the struggle of people with both brilliant minds and yet the familiar limitations of the human condition. One of Sandage's colleagues muses, "Allan Sandage wanted to be Hubble. Hubble wanted to be Einstein. And Einstein wanted to be a peacemaker. The great ones pay."

> *It's a great story, the modern version of the history of the universe, and maybe it's even true. It is probably part of the human condition that cosmologists (or the shamans of any age) always think they are knocking on eternity's door, that the final secret of the universe is in reach. It may also be part of the human condition that they are always wrong. Science, inching along by trial-and-error and by doubt, is a graveyard of final answers.*
>
> —Dennis Overbye
> *Lonely Hearts of the Cosmos*

Overbye recounts the contributions of many other scientists, and some, such as Stephen Hawking of recent best-seller fame, will be familiar to readers. Repeated attempts to show that "scientists are people too" become a bit tedious. One is not surprised to learn that physicists eat pizza, or take time out for snorkeling when attending conferences in Hawaii. And yet the author does illuminate an area of mystery for many nonscientists, as he conveys the sense of wonder and "wanting to know" that drives scientists, and the almost ecstatic joy that can accompany a breakthrough in understanding. These scientists find their deepest motivation in questions that many people wouldn't think to ponder. What happened 10^{-43} seconds after the Big Bang, an inconceivably short period of time that is less than a trillionth of a trillionth of a trillionth of a second? The world is bigger after one asks such questions.

What is most enjoyable is learning how scientists even begin to try and answer them. Overbye shows how the daily labor of men and women enables them to make statements about an event that occurred 15 to 20 billion years ago. It is a combination of intuition, time-consuming surveys of the sky, and the mental gymnastics of giants like Hawking that leads scientists to envision, for example, a universe that will "expand forever but not a day longer."

Overbye handles adroitly a complex and often confusing story. Given that scientists themselves are often confused about the collective status of their thinking, the author appreciates that readers may feel the same. He reiterates key points and is tutorial without being tedious. Like any popular science writing, the book contains analogies and descriptions which attempt to make such concepts as redshifts and quarks accessible to those with earthly experience. Overbye's analogies range widely in their effectiveness. Some are highly instructive: "The universe, Einstein realized, was the ultimate sagging mattress ... the weight of the whole cosmos could wrap space-time back around on itself, rather like the surface of a balloon. Shoot an arrow or a light beam infinitely out in any direction and it would eventually come back and hit you in the butt." Others are forced, and occasionally, a well-worn metaphor hurts: " For physicists, truth has always been beauty and beauty has always been truth."

For the author, the fate of the universe is more than an intellectual puzzle. "All my life," he writes, "I had been looking for some way out of the gray doom of ordinary existence." Allan Sandage is an exception among his peers in this regard, as years of gazing into the heavens turn a religious child into a religious man. "Sometime around 1980, Sandage said, he converted to Christianity. He would not divulge any more details. He didn't want to be a nihilist. Life was not a dreary accident." For most of the scientists involved, however, the

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questions, though profound, are not religious.

How did the universe come to be here? What will happen to it? No one with a sense of past or future can fail to be stirred by those questions and the story of how modern scientists pursue them. Overbye's engaging and insightful book is guaranteed to provide the general reader with a good base from which to appreciate the progress and the surprises that are no doubt in store in the years ahead. You will learn a great deal about what is known about the universe. And, if you don't know exactly how old the universe is or how it will end, you will find it both comforting and challenging to realize that, even among the best minds, you are not alone.

SINDBAD THE SAILOR II

THE LAST VOYAGE OF SOMEBODY THE SAILOR
John Barth
Little, Brown, $22.95, 573 pp.

Crystal Gromer

The Arabian nights were only as long as Scheherazade was clever, and she was very clever as it turned out, keeping death one night away by telling stories whose endings she promised the next night, and then the next, and the next—until there were a thousand and one nights, a thousand and one stories, and death had slipped away, an ending no longer necessary. To no less purpose and with no less skill does the narrator of John Barth's retelling of part of Scheherazade's repertoire, the seven voyages of Sindbad the Sailor, interweave those stories with the stories of his own life's voyages, seeking to find which name among the many he's given, which self among the many that he's been, he is.

He has a long job of it. He crosses oceans, he crosses centuries in his search.

Not that he means to. The rotable bezel of his Seiko (a bargain at a tax-free port) is his magic carpet, sending him back, mid shipwreck in the Indian Ocean, to the Iraq presided over not by Saddam Hussein but by the Caliph Haroun al-Rashid, where, though wealth is still counted in jewels, the world is not innocent, and where stories are the order of the day—or night. Each night for six successive nights, the narrator, a pseudo-Sindbad, a Somebody the Sailor, and his host, Sindbad the Sailor himself, tell the stories of their voyages. Autobiography, fiction, travelogue, adventure, romance, fable: the tales of the voyages parallel each other, until, more parable than parallel, they converge into the one story.

Like Scheherazade, our twentieth-century narrator narrates against the hand of death. But in place of palace, we have hospital; in place of Prince Shahryar, modern medicine—figured (well-figured) in a resident: auburn-haired, green-eyed, available—and a born listener. If the setting is sober, the narrator is not. This is John Barth (*The Sot-Weed Factor*, *Chimera*, and many more), after all, and his hero is variously exuberant, obnoxious, funny, self-conscious, and, not sober at all, but thoroughly intoxicated with sex, love, and story telling, especially with their commingling. For this narrator there can't be too much commingling.

Within the frame, the novel unfolds in alternate chapters, with alternate narrators and alternate times: the "present" of Sindbad's court, when he describes his famous voyages for his dinner guests, and the "past" of Somebody, this fifty-or-so-year-old-man who has been William Simon Behler, Simmon, Persimmon, Simon, Sy, William Baylor, Bill, B., Bey-el-Loor, Sindbad the Still-Stranded, and who is now playing Sindbad the Landman to Sindbad the Sailor. Like his predecessor the Porter in Scheherazade's version, this new Sindbad is summoned to his namesake's court when he is overheard singing his complaint:

We all commence our journey as
a little sperm and egg;

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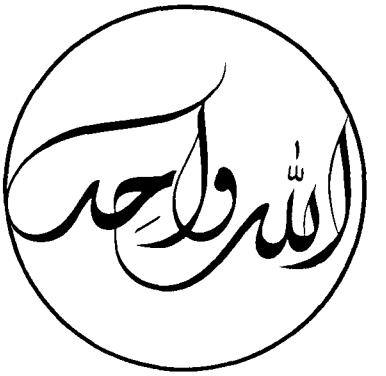

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Yet some wind up as millionaires, while others have to beg.

Some plot the course and give commands that others must obey.

Some live a hundred years; some die before they've lived a day.

Some reach safe harbor; some are cast away or lost at sea.

To Allah this makes perfect sense; I wish it did to me.

Again like his predecessor—of course, he has the advantage of a long-time fascination with *The Thousand and One Nights* and so he knows his part—he asks Sindbad to recount his tales, which we get together with morals, commentary, and other diversions, even other narratives, in a series of interludes which decrease proportionately as the voyages increase. On the one hand, we have islands that are really whales, giant birds and the giant birds' eggs that go with them, giant diamonds and the giant serpents that go with them, cannibals, mad comrades and mad kings. From each voyage Sindbad draws great wealth and four discernible morals. On the other hand, we have William Simon Behler's birth, childhood, and adolescence, the journalist William Baylor's career, marriage, affairs, the now lost Somebody's losses, griefs, and loves. Though successful enough as a writer to have lived comfortably and to have embarked with his auburn-haired, green-eyed lover (more lost than he in the Indian Ocean) on the adventure of retracing Sindbad's route, our Somebody cannot even find a name, much less a moral. "Make a name for yourself," his father had urged him as a boy; "I want you to be somebody." He has made a name for himself, but it fit no more than the others, and so he is, after all, Somebody.

Loss haunts this book, which is what gives it its power. The narrator's first loss came with his first voyage, for though he followed his twin sister into this world, he lived and she did not—not even long enough to merit a name; she is only B.G.(for Baby Girl) Behler, or Bijou to her twin. He narrates his childhood to her, as, he maintains, he had told her stories in the slippery liquid world they shared before birth. Even once he is in this world, he is at sea—figuratively always, and literally often enough. It is his fate to survive almost as many drownings as the legendary Sindbad, and to see, beginning with his sister, the women in his life, mostly auburn-haired, mostly green-eyed, the women who are the other half of his own self, swim away from him, leaving him to survive, but to survive alone.

And yet of course he is never really alone because he is always telling his story, his audience as fictive and as real as himself. As a child, the narrator found another and inarticulate consolation through rocking himself: "Ever so slightly, ever so lightly, I rocked, and it was not long before I reached that state between two worlds where distances go strange and the familiar is no more. I was in black space, suspended, or as it were with one eye open above some surface, one below." This is the rocking of birth, of sex, of the sea; it is the rocking of death. They are not so different, the lines we would draw between them no more solid than those we would draw between past and present, and our narrator knows both times at once, as he lives in two worlds at once and speaks (at least) two languages at once. Something he has sought his whole life for in stories and in words—he tries out many stories, and he tries out many words for them—eludes him still in the conscious world; and he must slip away to find it, past language, finally past life.

To say the point of our Somebody's story-telling is to move past storytelling at all is just like saying that the point of life is death: yes and no, or no and yes. The story that points past itself, Barth reminds us, can also be a really good story. "Oh my friends, what medicine it is to tell our stories," Sindbad the Sailor exclaims at one point in his narration.

Living and narrating, the narrator uses stories as his medicine—until, like Scheherazade, he needs them no longer. Living and reading and in need of as much medicine, articulate and otherwise, as we can get in this life, we are the benefactors of a surprise legacy: stories cheerful and moving, ever inventive, clever as Scheherazade's. "There was no Once upon a time," the embryonic Somebody says of the stories he told his twin sister because "our language had no tenses." And though, by his story's end, he has won a jade-eyed princess, he cannot close with living happily ever after. Nor, Western infidel that he is, lost in foreign Islam, can he say, Amen. □

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BREATHING UNDERWATER

THE LITANY OF THE GREAT RIVER
Meinrad Craighead
Paulist Press, $18.95, 76pp. 30 color illus.

Margaret O'Brien Steinfels

In a former life at a previous magazine, I published one of Meinrad Craighead's paintings, "Stars," on the cover. Not in their heavenly vault, but seen from the earth in the morning and in the evening, from inside the artist's imagination with birds and animals and organic forms, a mask (of God?) and a Benedictine nun, "Stars" was painted in deeply muted colors barely distinguishable from the gray background and the contrasting whites of a wimple and bird feathers. No actual stars, of course, but their morning and evening light suffused the images and the barely discernible colors.

Not long after the cover appeared, a friend (and subscriber) called to say, "that's one weird picture." He was not wrong according to the dictionary. Weird is "suggestive of the supernatural, unearthly, eerie, uncanny; of an odd and inexplicable character, unusual, strange, fantastic." But he meant more, or other, than just weird; his tone implied—"far-out" or "I don't get it." I understood what he meant. Even so, though I too found Craighead's pictures weird, that is, "unearthly, strange, fantastic," I also found them wonderful, awesome, and, to be truthful, deeply unsettling.

"Stars" was from *The Mother's Songs: Images of God the Mother* (Paulist, 1986). The paintings and text recount, evoke, and memorialize the memories, dreams, and experiences of Craighead's childhood in Little Rock and Chicago; her life, outer and inner, at Stanbrook Abbey in England and more recently in the desert mountains of New Mexico. The pictures and their accompanying stories are personal, but not private; they are religious and liturgical, but not devotional; they stir the psyche without being psychological. And, though they are images of God the mother, they do not pose theological questions, but induce theoeikonic reflection.

The Litany of the Great River continues the pattern. Here, the litanies in the prayerbook of her grandmother (Memaw of *The Mother's Songs*) and the litanies she chanted in parish processions as a child become the starting point for her litany of the earth and the heavens, of the living and the dead, of the animals and the humans, of all of creation, seen and unseen. In one painting, the invocation ("O Alma Mater, name us, we beseech thee") opens her imagination's weaving of the personal (her mother's death, the cottonwood tree planted at the gate in her memory, the figure in a dream carrying roses in her cape), and the religious (Mary, here perhaps as Our Lady of Guadalupe, the snake, old life and new). The subsequent soul-stirring induces in the viewer a reverie that is uncanny in calling up similar and related images from dreams, memories, and meditations of one's own.

The visual cannot be reduced to the verbal. Words cannot convey the powerful imaginative pull that draws one along through these pictures as through some watery, but breathable atmosphere of dreaminess and acute consciousness. Best to read before sleeping and see what happens. Something weird. □

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Giving context to the story

Lawrence S. Cunningham

The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship carries on the reference book tradition begun with Glazier's *The New Dictionary of Theology* (1987). A third volume on spirituality, now in preparation under the editorship of Michael Downey, is to follow.

The key words in the title of this current volume are *sacramental* and *worship* for the intention of the editor is to provide a comprehensive overview of the mediating gestures/symbols of the Christian faith as well as a broad coverage of the liturgical life of that same faith considered historically, phenomenologically, and theologically. The one word in the title which is a tad misleading is *dictionary*. There are no lexical entries in this work that define specific terms. Thus, there are generous essays on church music but one could not look up separate entries like "chant" or "motet." This problem could have been solved had their been an exhaustive index to the work but, in fact, apart from a topical index in which the disparate entries are put under general headings, there is no subject index. I have one other criticism: unlike the earlier volume, this one lacks running heads with the entries at the top of the page; the reader must therefore do a lot of thumbing and page-turning to find the relevant entries. Stylistically, the entries range from scholarly sobriety to somewhat breezy homilies.

The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship, *edited by Peter E. Fink, S.J., Glazier/Liturgical Press, $69.50, 1,352 pp.*

Apart from those technical criticisms there is much to praise in this volume. The long articles are informative and reflect standard positions of contemporary scholarship. There is a nice blend of historical entries along with suggestions for pastoral praxis as well as theological reflections. On major topics there is wide coverage. The Eucharist, for example, gets fifteen entries that range from theological and historical considerations to issues like eucharistic devotions outside of the liturgy and eucharistic chapels.

In sum: a useful reference tool that could have been made more user-friendly but deserves a place on the bookshelf. One goes to this work not to find the meaning of this or that sacramental/liturgical term but to find an overview of large topics ("Sacraments" or "Liturgies of the Eastern Churches").

We may take it as a given that anything Martin Marty writes about American religion is (1) worthy of note; (2) sensible and learned; and (3) eminently readable. This volume, the second of a trilogy about modern American religion, not to put too fine a point on it, is a briskly written, well-conceived, and panoramic account of religion in the United States between the two great wars.

The time period is a messy one for historians, if only because so many disparate things were happening: Prohibition; the tapering off of immigration; the cycle of boom and bust; looming fears of European fascism and the equally feared evolution of the Russian Revolution; and the cultural forces attendant upon increased mobility (automobiles); new modes of communication (movies and radio); cultural alienation and cultural experimentation (the Lost Generation; the Jazz Age); the advent of a coming war after only two decades of European peace; and so on.

Marty gives shape to his story by restricting his focus to "public religion"—the tensive discourse between church/synagogue and the idea of America. That focus, of course, means that not every denomination gets its full moment on the stage nor do the voices of Everyman and Everywoman get equal treatment. Marty's concentration is on those who speak or write or preach or organize. His history is cultural history with a keen ear for the rhetoric of American religious culture. He reminds us that it was only in 1931 that the Supreme Court stopped using the term "Christian people" to describe this country. Christian people meant, in the older parlance, what Marty calls "original stock Protestants." Thus, the discourse of those decades asked about the imposition of morality on the "Christian populace" (Prohibition); the criterion by which one judges what "Christian" means (fundamentalist versus modernist versus neo-orthodox in Protestantism); the place of the alien (anti-Catholicism; anti-Semitism); the nexus between Christian meaning and the economic polis (socialism versus capitalism); and so on. Those questions are still with us today even though the vocabulary of the discourse has changed and demographics have reshaped the players. (What significance do these

Modern American Religion: The Noise of Conflict, 1919-1941, *by Martin E. Marty, University of Chicago, $29.95, 480 pp.*

LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM *teaches theology at the University of Notre Dame.*

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demographic facts have? Today there are more Muslims in Chicago than Jews, and by the year 2000 half of all Catholics will speak Spanish as a first language.) We will not fully appreciate today's discourse without some sense of how these issues developed in our recent past. It is Marty's intent to give us the necessary background. I think he does it admirably.

The forces Marty chronicles are not part of a dead past. They remain with us. A personal vignette: I finished Marty's book the evening I returned from speaking at the local Catholic Worker house (a movement, fully discussed by Marty, founded in the 1930s and shaped by the Great Depression) here in South Bend and two months after I participated in a faculty seminar on the social thought of Reinhold Niebuhr who is a major player in Marty's account of the prewar period. Marty's book, then, nourishes my present life by his re-creation of the past. It is with keen anticipation that I await his third volume which will chronicle a past that is even more a part of our common present.

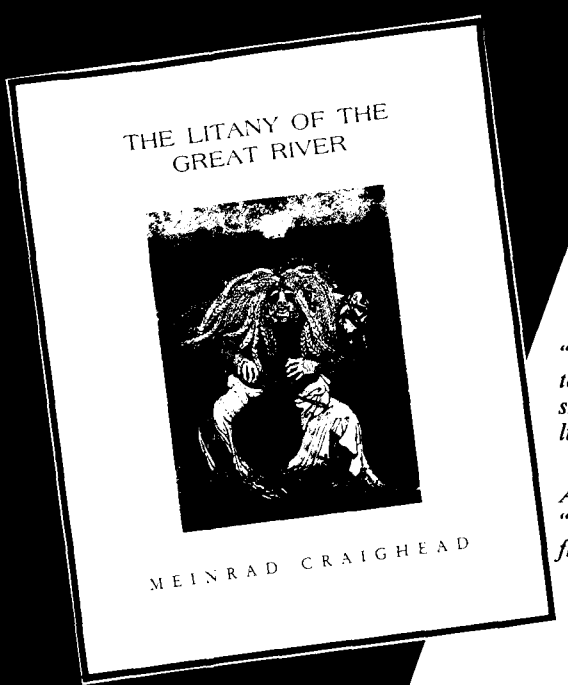
The Catholic Worker, founded in 1933 by Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day as a radical experiment in Christian service, is still alive and the subject of much bookish concentration. Murray, himself a Worker and a sociologist, examines the concept of hospitality in Christianity in general and its appropriation in three specific Worker houses (New York City, Rochester, and Worcester) in order to understand the complex relationship among three classes of people: the committed Workers, the long-term guests of the houses, and the clientele who come to the door for food and clothes but are not resident in the houses or formally attached to them.

Do Not Neglect Hospitality: The Catholic Worker and the Homeless, *by Harry Murray, Temple University Press, $34.95, 285 pp.*

Sociologists will undoubtedly read his work for information about status, human relationships, and the social dynamics of a caring community (which Murray contrasts with more bureaucratic care-giving agencies), but a less professionally concerned readership might find the work more valuable as an exercise in reality therapy. By using long chunks of his diaries and notes, he effectively deromanticizes the life of the Workers in order to bring us closer to what they see and live every day: the endemic violence, derangement, squalor, and hopelessness of contemporary urban poverty. He writes so well of their daily life, in fact, that we can overlook the book's origin as a dissertation and the inevitable blather and documentation that such works require.

Dorothy Day insisted that the Catholic Worker Movement was not an exercise in philanthropy or of improved social services; it was a sign of the presence of Christ among the poor, the seedbed of a new soci-

The Litany of the Great River
by Meinrad Craighead



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ety within the shell of the old. For all of the intellectual oddities and anarchic impulses that make Worker life so idiosyncratic (Murray documents them well), the Workers have identified with the poor and served them so completely over the decades that they are, in fact, a sign of Christ (thought they would most likely pooh pooh the very idea!) and for that we are all in debt to their witness.

Dorothee Soelle is a German theologian whose life is triangulated among three points: her native land, the United States (she teaches at Union Theological Seminary in New York), and various parts of the third world. She is Protestant by persuasion, nourished on that tradition by academic training, but, by disposition, irre-

Thinking about God: An Introduction to Theology, *by Dorothee Soelle, Trinity Press International, $15.95, 210 pp.*

vocably committed to the theology of liberation as she experiences it through active participation in liberationist struggles, anti-war movements, feminism, and her evident sympathies for the political party of the Greens.

This present volume took its shape from a series of popular lectures she gave in Germany to account for her role as a theologian in a confessing community of faith. The individual chapters are relatively brief but are ordered into a consistent argument for a way of doing theology that sketches out theological trajectories from the fundamentalist through the modern to the liberationist perspective (some helpful tables are used to set out the differences), with the latter seen as the only legitimate post-modern way of being theological.

The not fully converted (i.e., myself) may be put off by some of the rather shrill sermonizing (liberationists can seem so self-righteously sectarian) and/or the political cant, but such resistance should not blind us to some very important points she urges upon us. First, I very much like her notion of the necessity of doing theology from within a community so that theology does not become a sterile academic exercise. Equally useful is her observation that it is often people who are remote from the church who are so dogmatic about what it should be or do; Soelle writes from within the community. Furthermore, it strikes me as fundamentally true that the classical loci of theology, as she repeatedly insists, ought to be expansive enough to include the common experience of people who pray, struggle, and work to make the church one built of "living stones."

Soelle's theology, to borrow the jargon of Christology, is low rather than high; ascending rather than descending. She writes with passion and with an eye close to human experience. Her stated aim is not to introduce us to theology but to give us some sense of its passion. That perspective has been the greatest gift liberation theology has given the contemporary church and we should receive that gift with gratitude, even if it sometimes comes wrapped with a thin ribbon of tendentious political sloganeering.

Every Christian knows snippets of the psalms since they are, as the cliché would have it, the "prayerbook of the church." We use them in the liturgy because they are the prayers which Jesus used. Despite that warrant, the psalms are strange prayers, if for no other reason than the peculiarity of their imagery. Most of us have limited contacts with fortresses, shepherds, still waters, and panting deer. We use that language but must somehow appropriate it and make it our own.

Quesson's book (originally written in French) is an aid here. He has chosen fifty psalms (using the Grail rendition) for con-

The Spirit of the Psalms, *by Noel Quesson, Paulist Press, $14.95, 259 pp.*

sideration. For each of these he provides three glosses: (a) the psalm read from the perspective of Israel, i.e. its historical setting; (b) the psalm read "with Jesus"—against the background of the New Testament witness; and (c) the psalm read with our own time in mind. This strikes me as just the right balance. Quesson's meditations help us to understand the essential Jewish character of the psalms; their use by Jesus; and their pertinence for today. Such a strategy nicely combines scriptural scholarship with the needs of the life of prayer and worship. *The Spirit of the Psalms* is a pastorally meditative work, not a scholarly one. Should one wish to flesh out Quesson's somewhat brief reflections, one could read his book in tandem with the estimable volume of Walter Brueggemann: *The Message of the Psalms* (Augsburg, 1984).

The "other words" of Neyrey's title refers to the author's study of the Pauline corpus from the perspective of cultural anthropology. Borrowing heavily from the seminal work of Mary Douglas, Neyrey attempts to enter the symbolic universe of Paul to understand his world view: Who is within the purview of Paul's world?

Paul, in Other Words, *by Jerome Neyrey, Westminster/John Knox, $19.95, 259 pp.*

What are the boundaries of that world and how are those boundaries maintained? How does one handle deviance in such a world? How do those forces (evil, misfortune, malice, etc.) which threaten that world get handled? What is the relation of the micro-world of the body to the macro-world of the cosmos?

Anyone who has read much cultural anthropology knows that it can be rather murky terrain. Neyrey has a gift for organization and a clean expository style, such that his book, while repetitive in parts, is instructively easy to read. Indeed, one of Neyrey's intentions was to demonstrate his methodology in order to invite others to test the method in areas and on topics in Paul which he does not cover.

As a consumer rather than a producer of biblical scholarship, I must judge this book a success. It helped me immensely to see Paul from his own perspective, a perspective that was filled with dialectical tensions marking off the anomic world of chaos and the ordered world of salvation. Neyrey provides any number of tables setting out tensive points by which Paul contrasted what, theologically, we would call the arenas of grace and sin but which Neyrey

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names "maps" of acceptance/ deviance or, in the case of some passages (e.g., Galatians 3:1), the "bewitched" world/the exorcised world. What is revealed in this study is not the Paul of the systematic theologians but the Paul who lived in a specific world (Roman/Hellenistic) with a specific background (Pharisaic Judaism), and a specific faith (in Christ). The peculiar merit of Neyrey's analysis is that it gives the lie to the vulgar reductionisms of, say, the Bishop Spongs of our world, while, at the same time, protecting Paul from being seen only as the prototype of a sixteenth-century reformer of the Christian church. While not as profound and wide-ranging as Wayne Meeks's brilliant *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (Yale, 1983), it is, nonetheless, a very instructive and useful work.

Renan's famous *mot* that Jesus preached the kingdom of God and we ended up with the Catholic church was also an ideological assumption of a good deal of, mainly, Protestant biblical scholarship on Christian origins in general and the New Testament in particular. That is now a generally accepted fact but Jonathan Smith, in this superbly written and intellectually sophisticated work, shows that the same assumption undergirded a long tradition of comparative study in which scholars attempted to puzzle out the relationship of early Christianity and the mystery religions of antiquity.

Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity, *by Jonathan Z. Smith, University of Chicago, $24.95, 145 pp.*

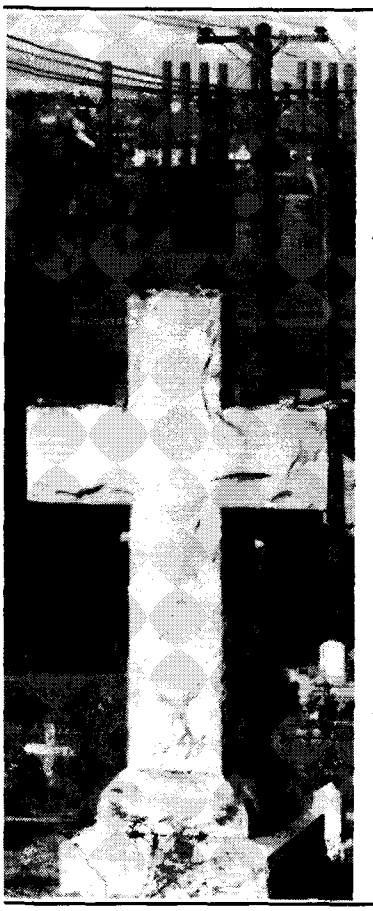
The traditional argument goes something like this: A putative "pure" Christianity, derived from the preaching of Jesus, became contaminated with the rites, ceremonies, and myths of the pagan religions with the resulting construction of early Catholicism. As early as the reflections of Thomas Jefferson (who with his correspondent, John Adams, becomes the focus of Smith's brilliant opening chapter) on the pure philosophy of Jesus, uncontaminated by paganism and the "mysticism of Plato" in particular, to the later investigations of those who saw Christianity tainted by the mystery cults, the aim was the same: to track down what Robert Wilken once described as the "myth of Christian origins."

Ranging over a vast amount of scholarship on a number of particular topics (e.g., the "dying/rising" god in antiquity; the question of Mithraism and Christianity, etc.), Smith reveals the hidden biases of much of this scholarship, not solely to demolish it, but to show how one might embark on different, less ideologically driven roads of research. Smith is interested in comparative research, but what he has to say also has pertinence, it seems to me, for the whole arena of historical-critical research on the New Testament where the desire, for example, to recover the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus may reflect a response to the siren song of the "pure" religion of Jesus. One may only hope that he continues to apply his formidable intelligence to this area of research.

The *Festschrift* is a dual opportunity: to honor a distinguished academic by the presentation of a collection of studies, and, for a contributor, the chance to clean out the desk drawer of a hitherto unpublished paper. In the case of the volume in honor of John Cobb's retirement from the Claremont faculty, there are a few recycled pieces (e.g., a lecture by Hans Küng touched up for the occasion) as well as some very instructive essays on theology and the contemporary university.

I would give the palm to the coeditor of this collection, David Ray Griffin, for his argument that theology has a place even in a state-supported school. Since the 1963 Supreme Court decision *Abington* v. *Schempp*, it has been a constitutionally

Theology and the University: Essays in Honor of John B. Cobb, Jr., *edited by David Ray Griffin and Joseph C. Hough, Jr., SUNY Press, $16.95, 276 pp.*



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guaranteed right to teach *about* religion in state schools (indeed, the vast majority of departments of religion in state universities derive their legal legitimacy from that decision); but theology? Yes, Griffin argues, if one understands theology not as a defensively orthodox discipline but as a rigorous inquiry into ultimacy done from a critically sophisticated stance. Such an enterprise, he contends, should not be merely tolerated but nourished.

In a companion essay the Harvard theologian Gordon Kaufman makes the same case from a somewhat different perspective, while Schubert Ogden (who was involved in the Charles Curran case as an investigator for the American Association of University Professors) untangles the many issues arising from university based theologians who must straddle both the world of their communities of faith and the astringent character of secular learning. Casting his net a bit wider, Joseph Hough stipulates that a university should not only seek to serve the good in the Aristotelian sense of the natural order but in the Thomistic sense of a common good ordered to the cosmos in relationship to God. Hough's argument is not for a recovery of the medieval world view but for a common good which takes account of ecology—a theme central to Cobb's own theology in recent years.

This volume is a welcome addition to the literature that ponders the role of theology in the academy when it is no longer easily accorded the title of the "Queen of the Sciences." It is a fitting tribute to John Cobb who has spent nearly all of his professional life as a theologian in the university.

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 306)

sibly a million Kurds and Shiites give evidence that the ruin following on war was greater by far than the original havoc caused through the invasion of Kuwait.

President Bush warred for Kuwait, but not for the Kurds and Shiites, who are in greater millions. Kuwait controls oil, the Kurds and Shiites do not. America and its Western partners went to war because the control of their oil supplies was threatened by Saddam's aggression. As Secretary of State James Baker said, the issue was jobs, which translated means oil. Those Arab members of the coalition which also possess oil reserves supported the American war to protect their own interests; the poorer Arab countries that joined the coalition were bribed. None of this fits within the principles of just-war doctrine.

JOHN F. BRANIGAN

The author replies:

John F. Branigan enriches the debate on the justice of "Operation Desert Storm" with several factual claims and moral assessments, which are not, however, beyond reasonable counterclaims and contrary arguments.

1. On the American Catholic bishops' views about the war, I continue to accept the authority of Archbishop Roach, who has said: "Most bishops ...have withheld a definitive judgment [on the morality of the war]."

2. On the right of the U.S. to defend Kuwait by the use of force, I follow the 1948 teaching of Pope Pius XII: "The solidarity of the family of nations forbids others to behave as mere spectators in an attitude of apathetic neutrality [when people are threatened with unjust aggression]."

3. Branigan estimates casualties of the war in the "hundreds of thousands." Such a toll would indeed raise serious questions of proportionality. I do not believe, however, that such estimates are yet in the public domain. If there is evidence for them, it should be published in full and assimilated in the public debate.

4. Branigan writes: "...the devastation and displacement of possibly a million Kurds and Shiites give evidence that the ruin following the war was greater by far than the original havoc caused through the invasion of Kuwait." Here perhaps lies the core of the difference between Branigan's moral calculations and my own tentative ones. For the moral weighing is not, in my view, between the ruin of war and the havoc caused by the invasion. It is rather between the ruin of war and the violation of the Kuwaiti people's *right* of independence. Piles of rubble on either side of the ledger create only a mirage of moral argument. The calculation must rather weigh spiritual realities: the unleashing of destruction in response to unjust aggression and, on the other side, the suffering of those whose claim to independence has been snatched away.

Branigan rightly implies that some consequences of the war (e.g., the flight of the Kurds) were not precisely foreseen. This fact is a part of the human condition and no excuse for moral paralysis. While it is still too soon to know whether the UN and allied preparations for the Kurds' return to their homes will work over the long term, it is perhaps not wholly utopian to hope that the glare of publicity, the UN initiatives, and Saddam Hussein's weakened condition will combine to provide the Kurds an opportunity to shape their own destiny, and that the continued presence of formidable allied forces, along with the continued effectiveness of sanctions, may bring about the removal of Iraq's stores of weapons of mass destruction. Such outcomes, likewise not foreseen in August, would set a formidable precedent to be pondered by would-be future aggressors. Sanctions may yet turn out to be a new and powerful instrument of justice in a new international order.

FRANCIS X. WINTERS

The power to rank

Austin, Tex.

To the Editors: I was surprised to see the reactionary and ill-informed article by David R. Carlin, Jr. called "Shakespeare's Embrace: The Values of Eurocentrism" [April 5]. I'm used to finding myself to the right of many opinions expressed by your columnists, but now I find myself looking over to the right at Carlin, and just

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behind him E. D. Hirsch, and a little farther off William Bennett, the three of them together sipping their whiskeys and wildly discussing how education ain't what it used to be.

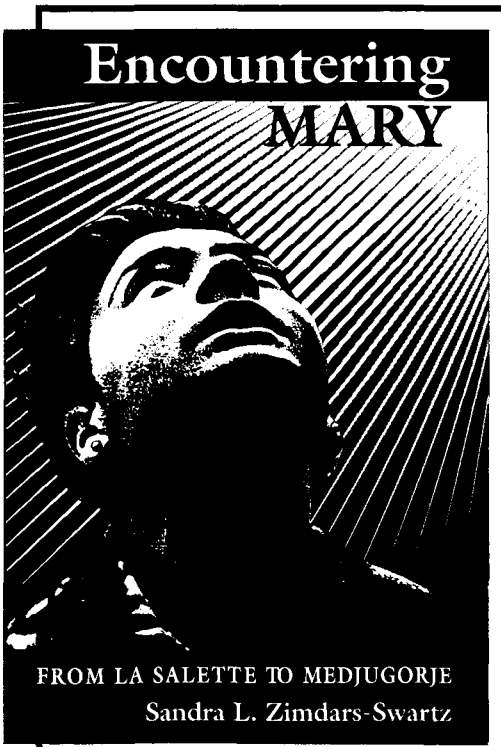
Carlin describes the political agenda that is "lurking behind" what he calls the "anti-Eurocentrism" crusade that is especially popular on university campuses (where it is called "multiculturalism," a term less sinister than Carlin's). He is half-right. Multiculturalism does combat the legacy of European imperialism, which I suppose even Carlin can agree is a bad legacy. But this political agenda does not "lurk"; most of its advocates are up front about their aims. The cultural program that does hide a political agenda is the one Carlin advocates. The politics behind his program lurks so well, dodging behind the pillars of Shakespeare and Cicero, et al., that apparently even Carlin is unaware of it.

Carlin tries to refute the anti-Eurocentrists by reminding us that there are two types of culture. One type is the narrow sense of the word—merely the "way of life of a people." All peoples have equal claims to possessing this type of culture, which Carlin describes pejoratively: "narrow, prejudiced, chauvinistic, inclined to overrate itself and its people while underrating the rest of the world." The other type of culture is what we are used to calling "high" culture, defined by Matthew Arnold as "the best that has been thought and said in the world" and praised by Carlin as being "broad, enlightened, and catholic." But this is not a refutation of multiculturalism but only a restatement of the position multiculturalists have been disputing. Citing Matthew Arnold in its defense doesn't help; to anyone halfway sympathetic with multiculturalism, Arnold is anathema; it's rather like saying the Democrats are bad and proving it on the authority of Ronald Reagan.

A problem with Arnold's definition is that it mystifies the adjudication of "high" culture. In this rather vague method of evaluation, new texts would be compared to those already recognized as "high." Those that measured up got to join the country club—that is, they were included in the anthologies and school curriculums. Those that didn't faded to obscurity. Such a method leads to the popular belief that "the test of time" will evaluate our texts for us. But that is mystification. Time evaluates nothing. No superhuman or transcendent or universal or self-evident criteria evaluate what is "the best that is thought and said in the world." Select groups of people with cultural authority decide what is "the best." And the judgments of people are always prejudiced by their own ideologies. Any historical study of what has been designated "high" culture will show how political, and how fickle, the criteria of "high" culture are.

Consider Carlin's own example of the demise of Celtic culture. Carlin ridicules multiculturalism by supposing it would resurrect in hereditary Celts (like Carlin and me) the Gaelic language, druidism, and pilgrimages to Stonehenge. Carlin writes: "My Celtic soul, I fear, lost its native hue somewhere in the labyrinthine ways of history," and adds that he has no desire to return to the druidic days. But multiculturalism doesn't advocate that he do so, but only that he examine exactly how his native hue was rinsed away and stop explaining it by calling the ways of history "labyrinthine." In historical reality, Celticism has been reduced to its present state by crimes as atrocious as Hitler's and Stalin's. If that claim sounds ridiculous, it's only because the English have been so good at promoting their own culture as "universal" and "the best that is thought and said in the world"; Goebbels was clumsy compared to Arnold. Anyone who turns to Arnold's *The Celtic Element in Literature* (which describes the Celts as feminine, irrational, mysterious, and sentimental and the Anglo-Saxons as masculine, rational, practical and intellectual) will find, lurking behind these descriptions, the rationalizations for the type of paternal exploitation that executed and starved hundreds of thousand of Celts, and dispossessed and exiled millions more. The English were able to destroy many people around the globe because they *convinced themselves* they were civilizing the savages and that it was their responsibility to do so.

Amazingly, Carlin at one point admits that "Eurocentrism" had this political agen-



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"You seem to be a very intelligent young man. Perhaps you could tone it down a little."

da; it enabled the exploitation of native populations by delegitimizing their cultures (thus Spaniards—Carlin's example—could rationalize enslaving Native Americans). But having made this concession Carlin immediately forgets it; it's as though he recognizes that Eurocentrism once had a political agenda but believes it doesn't have one now. Carlin apparently thinks that this "high" culture somehow transcends the narrow politics of ethnicity—and yet he admits that he thinks "societies and individuals can be ranked *in a hierarchy* according to how much of this high culture they possess" (my italics). But the authority to designate what is "high" is the power to establish these social hierarchies. Failure to recognize that the authority to judge culture confers power rises out of ignorance of history; a type of ignorance that (to paraphrase Carlin) leads to narrowness, prejudice, chauvinism, a tendency to overrate one's own culture and people while underrating the rest of the world.

An example is at hand. The characterization of the Iraqis as irrational and beyond the pale of civilized nations, promoted by George Bush and naively accepted by Americans, allowed us to ignore the deaths of tens of thousands of their soldiers, as if they were subhuman. (Ultimately, cultural hierarchies give the higher-ups the power to call the people they kill "collateral damage.") Such a characterization is a decidedly *un*catholic way of thinking.

What is Carlin afraid of? Is he afraid that some new order will rise that won't let him listen to his Puccini records? Perhaps he has a genuine fear, as we all do, of things unfamiliar and different. If that is the case, I hope I haven't alienated him by the stridency of my reply.

JOSEPH KELLY

The author replies:

I wonder if Mr. Kelly would kindly point out to me one good thing, from Christianity to ice cream, which has not been put to bad use by its fans.

I have no doubt that the English authorities who oppressed my Irish forebears with penal laws and slaughtered my Scottish forebears at Culloden did so with easy consciences—consciences made easy by the confidence the English possessed that theirs was a higher civilization than those of the Scots or the Irish: England, after all, being the land of Shakespeare, Milton, Newton, Locke, etc. But the merits of Shakespeare et al., whatever those merits may be, do not get diminished because their works have been put to bad uses by the average sensual man.

To say, as Mr. Kelly and his fellow "multiculturalists" seem to be saying, that a thing is bad because it has been used badly is a non-sequitur. But then again, to be offended by a non-sequitur is to prove one's attachment to logic, a discipline invented by Aristotle—who (we regret to report) was a white, European male.

The fundamental disagreement between Mr. Kelly and me is that he believes we ought to get out of the business of passing cultural judgments, whereby we find some things better and some worse; whereas I believe that (a) human beings are by nature animals that make value judgments and (b) since we are bound to make these judgments anyway, we ought to try to get them right.

Of course, if Mr. Kelly were consistent in his nonjudgmentalism, he would refrain from passing judgment on the likes of Bennett and Hirsch and me. Instead he would mark us down as belonging to a certain cultural tribe and say: "Oh, isn't it lovely, all this cultural diversity. I have my views, Carlin has his, the Eskimos have theirs, the Nazis have theirs, etc. And we are all equally correct in our own multicultural ways!"

That Mr. Kelly's multicultural tolerance has probably not yet grown catholic enough to condone nazism speaks well for his moral instincts; but it speaks badly for his logic. For monstrosities akin to nazism lie at the logical end of the road he is inviting us to travel. To paraphrase another white, European male: "If there is no absolute standard of judgment, then everything is permitted." We have just spent most of the twentieth century verifying the truth of that proposition. Why are Mr. Kelly and his friends so eager to repeat the experiment?

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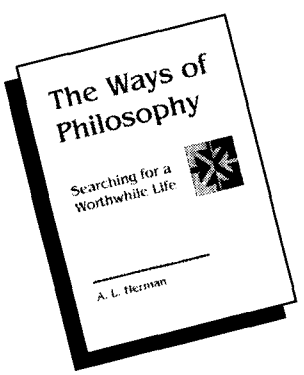

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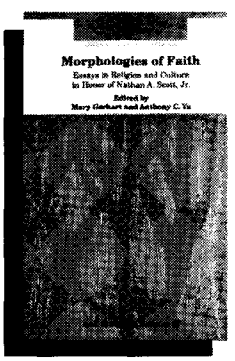

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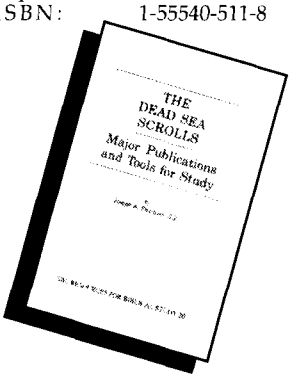

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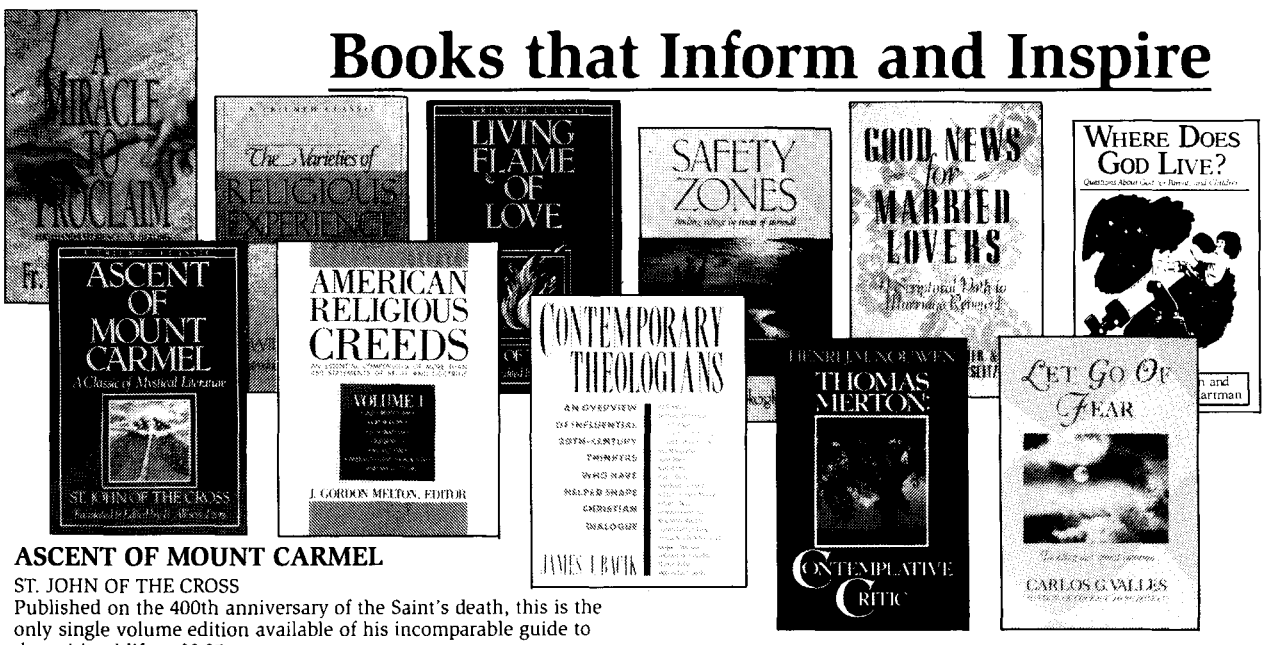

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